

PUBA 623: ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION 2013

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Office: Saunders 409

Office Hours: T-W-R 4-6 pm; appointments at other times are welcome given schedule feasibility.

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Meeting Place: Saunders 637 **Meeting Time:** Wednesdays 6-8:30 PM

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is a seminar in which we will engage in graduate-level discussion of both core-literature concepts and contemporary problems in organizational communication. We will emphasize the mission of **understanding and optimizing communication in the workplace**, and **we will focus a major portion of our application of these concepts in public service**. Our approach will be that of guided discussion, activities, and focused instruction. Everyone will assume significant roles in our group's discussions and activities. We will use assigned readings and discussions thereof; structured experiences; group processing; and multimedia presentations to facilitate learning.

By the end of the course, participants should:

1. Understand what contributes to healthier communication in organized endeavors, particularly in public service;
2. Be challenged to improve themselves as communicators in the workplace; and
3. Experience individual growth and development as communicators and specialists in organizational communication.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

1. Harris, T. & Nelson, M. [2008]. *Applied Organizational Communication: Theory and Practice in a Global Environment*. 3rd Ed. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. This volume provides the *what...* the *why...* and the *how* of communication in organizations. **Available on [Laulima](#)** for evaluation purposes and for a limited time. I encourage you to purchase a hard copy of this volume, if you can find it.
2. Other readings posted for the course website on [Laulima](#).
3. Other readings as assigned.

ATTENDANCE

I expect regular attendance. "Roll" will be taken, and repeated absences will inevitably hurt your performance in this class. **You may miss up to three class sessions without penalty. Thereafter thirty points per absence will be deducted from your course point total.** "Medical" excuses or other incidental excuses for absences will count toward the three you may use. Special emergencies and catastrophes requiring extended absence from class will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis in a manner that is fair for everyone in the course. But you must let me know about those circumstances as soon as you can. Missing six or more class sessions will result in your automatically failing the course.

Come to class in a timely manner. Coming in late may disrupt class and annoy both your professor and your classmates. Roll will be taken as class begins. Five points will be deducted from your course point total for every time you are fifteen minutes late. To avoid this problem please notify me ASAP of traffic and other reasons for being delayed.

* At the moment I am having technical difficulties with my office phone. Please use my email as a primary contact channel for the time being.

CONSULTATION

Make appointments and visit—or email me—for comments, help and answers to your questions. I will almost always be available during my posted office hours if I'm not meeting or in the PUBA office. If I'm not in Saunders 409 check with the PUBA office in 632.

The best way to establish initial contact for consultation is email; you should briefly state the nature of your question and suggest times during which you can meet. While I may not be able to see you right away [though often I can], the important thing is getting your request to me.

A WORD ABOUT CONSENT

Your continued enrollment in this class beyond the first meeting will be taken as an indication that you fully understand and agree to the course governance terms set forth in this course description and syllabus. Study this document carefully. If you discover something that will become a problem for your particular situation as a student (i.e., special needs or challenges that you face), you should notify me immediately. Saying "it's not fair" will not get you out of a possible bad grade situation. If you find something with which you cannot live, drop the class now. Otherwise I will do my utmost to help you succeed in this course.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

WEEKLY JOURNALS

You will be required to keep a journal of your thoughts and learning regarding communication in the workplace on a weekly basis. Your journal entries should detail what you have learned and considered—and how you have changed as a result. I will expect you to go well beyond statements such as "this is what I learned this week..." and into reflection of "how my understanding" and "practice" will change. Does your learning help you understand past events? Do you notice personal patterns and ways of thought and response that you are learning must be changed? How does what you've learned both comfort and challenge you?

Your weekly journal entries [copies of which you will submit to me at the *start* of each session] should be at least two pages in length [double-spaced, word-processed] if they are to evince adequate thought and reflection.

I do not guarantee a response to, or evaluation of, each journal entry you submit. This is particularly true of commenting on your writing per se. While hearing each week from me may be desirable, I'm not sure of my ability to keep that commitment regularly. We will be discussing your entries in small teams during most of our sessions; this approach will have its own unique advantages, more so as we advance through the term.

The Weekly Journals assignment is worth a possible 50 points.

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS

Your ability to examine particular facets of an organization's communication system and share your understanding in practical ways with others is very important. I will therefore be giving you two opportunities to exercise your observational, analytic, and communicative skills throughout the term—individually, in dyads or triads, depending on how many participants are enrolled in the course. The first round of Investigative Reports requires you to specifically describe a specific incident in your organizational experience from the standpoint of a concept, theory or principle we've discussed in class. The second round of IRs requires you to construct a case study about any topic relevant to organizational communication.

The Investigative Reports assignment is worth a possible 50 points.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Participation in this course will mean that you are almost always with us, actively engaging in our conversations, and completing ad hoc assignments on time. My lectures are **almost never conventional lectures**, and **almost always involve everyone in the group** as I *ask questions about the topic du jour*. Be prepared to answer them!

This course's success depends on your conscientious participation in our discussions. Your participation affects everyone else in the course. I therefore expect full and competent participation in our discourse on organizational communication. This means that I will expect you to:

1. Complete our course readings/assignments **before the class sessions** in which we discuss them;
2. Come to our sessions with something to say that is both meaningful to you and relevant to the rest of the group;
3. **Listen actively to others, joining our conversation.**

The worst possible outcome when I ask you a question concerning something you should have read about in advance is ten seconds of...silence! Coming to class unprepared, and answering the assigned questions reading directly from our text, is not sufficient. [*Yet, people do tend to do just that!*]

Language proficiency is not important to me, so if English is not your first language do not let that impede your attempts to participate. One of my best-participating students of all time spoke EBL [English as a Broken Language—like my Japanese ability!] but that didn't matter. The key is that she wasn't afraid to express her opinions. Fluency was no obstacle for her and it usually should not be for anyone in my courses.

Cultural tendencies of some students may make our style of class discussion uncomfortable. If you are from a “collectivist” culture where students just take notes and opinions are not stated directly—especially in front of professors—you must learn to adapt to our local, expressive, somewhat individualist academic culture. On the other hand, listening, fostering a balanced discussion, and allowing others time to express their views may be a challenge for a strongly “individualist” student. I am looking for our group to assume a posture that avoids these albeit stereotypical extremes. I will hold all students equally accountable for participation, though I will allow some “warm-up time” for students for whom this kind of discourse may not feel “natural.”

My objective is not to look for reasons to assign low grades as the term ends. I will make every effort to be fair to you. After all, *I want you to succeed in this course*. I will use this scale in grading your class participation:[†]

- 100 points: Your participation in all class discussions demonstrated unusual focus and mastery of the reading materials for each class session. Your participation was a remarkable asset to our processing of ideas and concepts offered in PUBA/COM 623.
- 90 points: You participated in almost every class discussion; your participation was constructive and demonstrated thorough familiarity with the reading and conceptual materials for each class session.
- 80 points: You participated in many class discussions; your participation was usually constructive [though sometimes irrelevant]; you demonstrated some familiarity with the reading materials for each class session. [*below the 80-point level the curve drops quickly!*]
- 60 points: You participated in class discussions about half the time. Your participation was about evenly divided between being constructive along the lines of our discussions and being less than relevant. Your participation did not demonstrate familiarity with the reading materials. This usually leads to a “B” grade.
- 40 points: You participated only occasionally in class discussions; your contributions were infrequent, not relevant or not informed by reading materials to the extent that you did not contribute meaningfully to our discourse on PUBA/COM 623 material generally over the term. You will be given a grade of “C” for PUBA/COM 623 if your participation is of this most unsatisfactory nature.

There are a total of 100 points possible for class participation.

[†] An “A” grade assumes *excellent* and *frequent communication throughout the semester!* Just make the effort! You'll be happy you did, and you will bless everyone else in the group...including *me*.

COURSE GRADE

Your course grade will be assigned at the end of the semester. Your course grade is based on simple point totals—you will not be competing against others in the class. You will get out of the course what you put into it. "Plus-Minus" grading may be employed to reflect higher or lower levels of performance within letter grade ranges or to account for minor "intangibles" such as the quality of work, attitude, and closer evaluation of contributions.

200-180 points='A' range.

179-160 points='B' range.

159-140 points='C' range.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Subject to change upon circumstantial necessity.

Week	Topic, Activity, Assignment, Reading(s)	Comments
1	Introduction and Orientation	
8/28	Preliminary Assignments: Journal Entry 1	
2	Definitions; Harris Chapter 1: General OrgComm matters	
9/4	Journal Reviews [JRs]; Comm Models; Activities; Debriefing	
3	Harris Chapter 2: Perception	
9/11	[JRs]; Investigative Reports [if scheduled]	
4	Harris Chapter 3: Overview of MGT & Org Theory	
9/18	[JRs]; Investigative Reports [if scheduled]	
5	Harris Chapter 4: Verbal Communication	
9/25	[JRs]; Investigative Reports [if scheduled]	
6	Harris Chapter 5: Nonverbal Communication	
10/2	[JRs]; Investigative Reports [if scheduled]	
7	Harris Chapter 6: Networks and Channels	
10/9	[JRs]; Investigative Reports	
8	Harris Chapter 8: Listening	
10/16	[JRs]; Investigative Reports	
9	Harris Chapter 9: Interpersonal Communication	
10/23	[JRs]; Investigative Reports	
10	Harris Chapter 10: Small Group Communication & Teams	
10/30	[JRs]; Investigative Reports; IR2 Assignment; Case Study Workshop	IRs: Joe; Tyler
11	Leadership Topics [material by Ady]	
11/6	[JRs]; Read Harris 11 for alternative perspective & background.	IRs: Tofaaga; Deb
12	Leadership Topics Continued	
11/13	[JRs]; Investigative Reports	
13	Class-Generated Topics Continued	
11/20	[JRs]; Investigative Reports	
14	Class-Generated Topics Continued	
11/27	[JRs]; Investigative Reports	
15	CHAPTER 12: Technology and Communication	
12/4	[JRs]; Investigative Reports	
16	Last Day of Class! Wrap-Up and Party	
12/11	[JRs]; Debrief & Discussion of Semester: What did we learn? Takeaways?	

Course sessions follow this general pattern:

1. Journal Reviews [JRs] in groups;
2. Investigative Reports [when scheduled];
3. Lectures/Discussions and/or structured experiences;
4. Debriefing &
5. Wrap-up.