COM 5900 (Fall 2019)
Senior Project in Communication Studies

Instructor: Dr. Rahul Mitra
Course Time/Days: Wednesdays, 6-8:30 p.m.
Course Location: 237 Manoogian Hall
Instructor's Office Location: 541 Manoogian Hall
Instructor's Email Address: rahul.mitra@wayne.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays 4-5 pm, Thursdays 3-4 pm, and by appointment

Course Description:
This course is the capstone course for Communication Studies majors. Through your previous coursework in the major you have acquired a comprehensive understanding of communication concepts, theories, and methods. Given that COM 5900 is one of the final courses you will complete as a COM major at WSU, it will give you a format for integrating the knowledge, skills, and abilities you have developed over the past years of study.

There are two broad goals of this course. First, through a variety of projects and assignments, you will engage in career preparation and professional development for the next phase of your life, after graduating from Wayne State University. Second, you will apply your learning thus far, on various communication theories and research, to work on a team project of community importance. The format of the class will be a combination of discussions, workshops, and training sessions; you must complete the assigned readings for each class session. You will have time during our class sessions to work in your project teams, but you should realize that working on real projects with real clients WILL require you to meet frequently with clients and your team members off-campus outside class hours. If you pace yourself and plan accordingly, you will be able to succeed in this class.

Learning Outcomes:
We have five learning outcomes for all students in the communication studies major. As such, these same learning outcomes apply for this course. By the end of the semester,
- Students will apply the appropriate research methods to answer communication or communication-related questions related to community import.
- Students will think critically about messages to reach an effective conclusion or outcome.
- Students will demonstrate competency in written communication skills.
- Students will demonstrate competency in oral communication skills.
- Students will utilize communication theory as a tool to understand how messages function across multiple contexts.

Required Texts:
Readings will be distributed via Canvas.

Recommended Resources:
Your textbook from Communication Theory coursework will come in very handy to decide how to work on the client project. In addition, you can consider some of the following resources to help you write the report for your project:

Lindemann, K. (2018). *Composing research, communicating results: Writing the Communication research paper*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.).* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

For a quick guide, you can look up: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/1/

Wayne State University Library has a Communication Guide at:
http://guides.lib.wayne.edu/content.php?pid=72657&sid=538050

Assignments:

Attendance/participation: Participation is a big part of this class, and will comprise a part of your grade. It should be clear to me throughout the semester that you have read and critically engaged each other's work, and that you are dedicated to the final course project.

Your grade will be based on my judgment of both the *quality* (i.e., informed by critical thinking) and *quantity* (e.g., frequency of engagement in class workshops) of your course participation. Your attendance will be considered in your participation score – if you are not present in class to participate on a regular basis, then clearly this is a participation problem. Each unexcused absence beyond 2 will subject your final participation grade to a penalty of 5 points for each additional absence off your participation grade.

Career Preparation Portfolio: Over the course of the semester, you will submit material that will form part of your eventual career preparation portfolio. The portfolio includes examples of your best work, career preparation material, and self-management tools. Specifically:
1. *Sample Work:* Potential employers will want to see examples of your work. Thus, go back through your past coursework and find the ONE best paper (min. 5 pages) and the ONE best oral presentation (3-10 minutes) you have given, and *revise* each to make them your absolute *BEST* work possible that you will include in a portfolio. If you have been in the habit of throwing away your work when the semester is over, then you will have a lot of extra work to do in this class, as you will need to recreate them from scratch/memory. They will be subject to plagiarism checks, via Unicheck on Canvas. (Submit both works online via Canvas.)
2. *KSA Profile.* Think about the communication courses you have taken (including this one), the jobs you've had, and your hobbies/extracurricular activities. Identify at least 3-5 different types of **K**nowledge or specific **S**kills or **A**bilities that you acquired as a result of your previous experiences that you think make you an excellent applicant for a job/promotion. In the profile, you will have a "Coursework" section, an "Employment" section, and a "Hobbies/Activities" section. In each section you will list the 3-5 different KSAs you acquired from the various courses/jobs/activities, and create a brief description to prove you have those KSAs (2-3 pages; submit hard copy in-class).
3. *Cover Letter and Resume.* Write a cover letter and resume for a job or promotion for which you could realistically apply (1 page cover letter, 1 page resume). You should provide a copy of the job posting, and state where you obtained it from (for online job listings, provide the website URL; for offline listings, provide issue/volume details), along with your cover letter and resume. (Submit hard-copies of both in class.)

4. *Internship/Job Fair Experience Essay.* You should attend an internship or job fair relevant to a position that interests you, for at least 1-2 hours, and write a 2-page response essay on your experience. Things you should cover in your response: where did you go, what career prep did you undertake before attending, 3-5 key things that struck you about the fair, what did you do and who did you talk to at the fair, parting thoughts on what you learned or what you hope to get from this experience. (In addition to possible job fairs held on campus, you can check the Michigan Talent Connect website https://www.mitalent.org/calendar for something that may be better suited for you.) (Submit hard copy in-class.)

5. *Online Profile Management.* You will create a detailed and sophisticated professional profile on LinkedIn, and submit the website URL of your profile via Canvas. You should also submit a 1-page response essay on how and why you designed your professional profile, detailing the kinds of interaction you engage in (and why) on that website. (Submit hard copy of essay in-class.)

6. *Self-care Strategies.* Write a 2-page manifesto or declaration describing 3-4 self-care strategies that you will try to implement in your career. You may discuss any of the issues we will discuss in class over the semester (e.g., extreme jobs, finding meaningful work, work-life alignment), or something else that may be more relevant to your case. For each strategy, discuss: why is it relevant to the job or profession you anticipate, what are the consequences of not engaging this self-care strategy, how do you propose to implement this strategy, and what are some precautions you might have to address to ensure you don't get swamped nevertheless. (Submit hard copy in-class.)

Team Project: You will draw on your gathered expertise over the past few years to work on a team project (3-4 people per team). You will execute the project, in consultation with your client, and you will write a detailed report on what you did. You are expected to draw on communication theory and research, covered in your past coursework, to execute this project.

Please note that working in teams, often distributed across multiple regions, is commonplace in jobs and organizations across different professions, and employers routinely emphasize "Good teamwork skills!" in their hiring. You should be able to highlight the work you are doing for this project in you CV and online career profile, when you are on the job market!

There are specific sub-parts to this assignment:
1. *Proposal.* Talk with your client to discuss your brief, and submit a project proposal and timeline to me for approval. (3-4 pages)
2. *Progress Report.* Describe what you have been doing so far: meetings and data collection, planning and processes, theories to be used (and explain why they are relevant). Also outline what's left to do over the semester, and if you have a revised timeline. (5-6 pages)
3. *Project Report.* Final paper should comprise of the brief or rationale, literature and theory cited, methods, results, and discussion relevant to the project. (15-20 pages, APA style)
4. *Project Presentation.* This should be a 10-12 minute professional grade presentation outlining key elements, describing actions/methods, and presenting main findings.
5. *Process Report and Peer Evaluations.* Each team member should submit this after the team projects are complete. It should come to 3-4 pages, and will contain two parts. First is an analysis of the team process, using communication theory to help you in the analysis. You can examine the group interaction, interpersonal dynamics, message

effects, persuasiveness, leadership, etc. You should use at least ONE communication theory to aid in your analysis. The second part is a peer evaluation. Indeed, a common complaint about group work is when a member fails to do his/her job. To address this issue, you will evaluate each of your team members (INCLUDING YOURSELF) on the basis of their PERFORMANCE in the team, and rate them as exceptional ("A"), acceptable ("B"), or unacceptable ("C"). You will need to justify the ratings in writing. I will take this information <u>under advisement</u> when I assign their final attendance/participation grade in the class. When making your assessments, consider the following issues:

- The individual's dependability
- His or her contribution of ideas
- The quality of effort put forth/motivation
- Ability to work with others
- Communication skills
- Follow through on commitments
- Productivity
- Attitude—about the project, toward others, etc.

Tips for better teamwork: Assign roles, based on the strengths and experiences of team members. Roles include Team Lead (who guides the whole team), Note Taker/Communicator (who takes notes at team meetings and communicates with me with progress reports), Lead Writer (who takes point on the final written work), Lead Presenter (who takes point on the final oral presentation), Lead Literature Reviewer (who takes point on the library research section), Lead Methodologist (who takes point on planning/executing the method for the research-aspect of the project and analyzing the data). These roles can be combined, depending on the number of team members. Each member has to take lead on at least ONE area and ALL members are expected to support the lead in his/her role.

Available Projects: There are several projects available, and clients will describe each of these in more detail on Sep 4. Briefly:
- The Michigan Sierra Club/Healing Our Waters Coalition has two projects.
  - *Op-Ed Project:* Develop a one-pager about HOW to distribute among stakeholders, and a series of opinion-editorial pieces on each of the 5 priorities of the HOW group, based on interviews with key members.
  - *Success Stories:* Interview key HOW members on successful initiatives and produce both short video clips of the interviews and 1-page "success stories" that can be easily uploaded online.
- Brilliant Detroit has two projects.
  - *Asset-Based Community Development:* Work with a local advisory team of BT to convene neighbors and discuss and record the assets among people in the neighborhood. This might involve interviewing local residents, creating one-pagers and other media tools, and supporting the advisory team in its messaging needs.
  - *Organizational Communication Audit:* Through interviews with key staff and stakeholders, and using the ICA Org-Com Audit, gather data on how information is shared and decisions are made within the organization.
- Peoples' Water Board Coalition has 1 project.

o   *Myth-Busting for Water Justice:* Several stereotypes and misinformation abound regarding water shutoffs to low-income Detroiters. Examine a series of interviews with community organizers and work with PWBC to create a series of myth-busing graphics and copy text that can be used on websites, social media, etc.

Grading:
To review, your course grade will be determined by:

1. Attendance/Participation   75 points
2. Career Preparation Portfolio
    a. Sample Work (Written + Oral)   20 + 20 = 40 points
    b. KSA Profile   25 points
    c. Resume & Cover Letter   20+20 = 40 points
    d. Internship/Job Fair Experience   25 points
    e. Online Profile & Response   20+20 = 40 points
    f. Self-Care Strategies Manifesto   30 points
3. Team Project
    a. Proposal   20 points
    b. Progress Report   50 points
    c. Project Report   100 points
    d. Project Presentation   25 points
    e. Process Report & Peer Evaluations (Indl.)   30 points

TOTAL: 500 pts.

For all assignments, you will be graded on the following parameters:
- Engaged and active participation in class and online
- Clarity of meaning and presentation (including spelling, grammar, and punctuation)
- Effective and clear use of theory
- Effective and ethical data gathering
- Effective and ethical organizing of material
- Persuasiveness of your arguments/analysis
- Adherence to set guidelines (e.g., APA style for final paper)

A "C" grade is earned when a student does average work. Average work means that all assignment requirements have been met. A "B" is earned when a student does above average work. Above average work means that all course requirements are met, and additional critical insight or exemplary research is applied to a topic. An "A" grade is earned when a student does exemplary work.

Final grades will be assigned according to a standard scale:

465 – 500	A	93%+
450 – 464	A-	90%+
435 – 449	B+	87%+
415 – 434	B	83%+
400 – 414	B-	80%+
385 – 399	C+	77%+
350 – 384	C	70%+

335 – 349   D+   67%+
315 – 334   D   63%+
300 – 314   D-   60%+
299 and below   F   below 60%

Incompletes: Incompletes are reserved for extraordinary circumstances such as personal emergencies that can be documented. An incomplete is granted when in the judgment of the instructor a student can successfully complete the work of the course without attending regular class sessions. Incompletes, which are not converted to a letter grade within one year, will automatically revert to an F (failing grade).

Withdrawing from Class: Students who withdraw from a course after the end of the 4th week of class will receive a grade of WP, WF, or WN.

- WP will be awarded if the student is passing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
- WF will be awarded if the student is failing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
- WN will be awarded if no materials have been submitted, and so there is no basis for a grade

Please be advised that withdrawing from a class has severe consequences; for this reason, please treat it as a matter of last resort and consult me before you withdraw. For more information, please refer to:
http://finaid.wayne.edu/receiving/withdrawing.php

Students must submit their withdrawal request on-line through Pipeline. The instructor must approve the withdrawal request before it becomes final, and students should continue to attend class until they receive notification via email that the withdrawal has been approved. Students who stop attending but do not request a withdrawal, will receive an automatic F (failing grade).

Grade Appeals: The college policy for appealing a final grade can be found at:
http://www.cfpca.wayne.edu/files/FinalGradeAppeal.pdf

Policy Statements

Attendance: You are expected to attend and participate actively in class. No cell phone use in class, unless approved by the instructor beforehand. If you are using tablets and/or laptops, I expect you to be ONLY using them for class-work, and not distract anyone in the class.

Canvas: Readings for this class will be posted on Canvas, so please look up the course page regularly. Call C&IT at (313) 577-4778 if you have problems accessing Canvas.

Disabilities: If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. The SDS telephone number is

313-577-1851 or 313-202-4216 for videophone use. Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services' mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University. You can learn more about the disability office at www.studentdisability.wayne.edu To register with Student Disability Services, complete the online registration form at: https://wayne-accommodate.symplicity.com/public_accommodation/

Please be aware that a delay in getting SDS accommodation letters for the current semester may hinder the availability or facilitation of those accommodations in a timely manner. Therefore, it is in your best interest to get your accommodation letters as early in the semester as possible.

Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty: Materials that are clearly not the student's own work or which are not appropriately documented will be subjected to close scrutiny. All acts of academic dishonesty including cheating and plagiarism will be treated as violations of appropriate student conduct and will be subject to disciplinary action. The University Due Process Policy can be found at: http://www.doso.wayne.edu/judicial/index.htm.   Students should not use work that was substantively done for other classes unless otherwise approved by the instructor.

Religious Observances: It is Wayne State's policy to respect the faith and religious obligations of students, faculty and staff. Students with exams or classes that conflict with their religious observances should notify me well in advance so that we can work out a mutually agreeable alternative.

Other Policies: Since this is a graduate seminar, I encourage and expect the active participation of all class members. Please keep in mind the need to respect the diversity of opinions and values that may be expressed in class, and the ensuing need for civil and respectful discussions.

COURSE SCHEDULE
Please ensure that you complete the readings assigned for each day ahead of class.

Aug 28:   **Review of syllabus**
                  Introductions

Sep 4:   **Project Kickoff;** *Initial Meeting with Clients*

Sep 11:   **Knowledge, Skills & Abilities analysis**
                  CDC: The Importance of KSAs (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities) in the Federal
                          Application Process; Retrieved from:
                          https://www.cdc.gov/hrmo/ksahowto.htm
                  Doran, G.T. (1981) There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and
                          objectives. *Management Review (AMA FORUM)*, 70(11), 35–36.
                  Kay, J. (2018, Mar. 19). How to answer KSA questions. *Fedsmith.com*. Retrieved
                          from: https://www.fedsmith.com/2018/03/19/answer-ksa-questions/

Sep 18:   **Project Workshop 1: The Proposal**
                  Career Portfolio: KSA profile due

Sep 25:   **Résumés & Cover Letters**
                  Diaz, C.S. (2013). Updating best practices: Applying on-screen reading strategies
                          to résumé writing. *Business & Professional Communication Quarterly, 76*,
                          427-445.
                  Leahy, R.L., & Filiatrault, A. (2017). Employers' perceptions of the benefits of
                          employment electronic portfolios. *International Journal of ePortfolio*, 7,
                          217-223.
                  Writing a Federal Resume: http://ksadoctor.com/services/federal-resume-writing-
                          service/
                  Project Proposals due

Oct 2:   **Self-branding Online & Cyber-vetting**
                  Ultz, S. (2016). Is LinkedIn making you more successful? The informational
                          benefits derived from public social media. *New Media & Society, 18*,
                          2685-2702.
                  Berkelaar, B.L. (2014). Cybervetting, online information, and personnel selection:
                          New transparency expectations and the emergence of a digital social
                          contract. *Management Communication Quarterly, 28*, 479-506.
                  Career Portfolio: Résumés & Cover Letters due

Oct 9:   **Job Interviews & Internship Fairs**
                  Rivera, L.A. (2015). Go with your gut: Emotion and evaluation in job interviews.
                          American Journal of Sociology, 120, 1339-1389.
                  Palomares, A. (2000). Employer expectations of students attending job fairs.
                          Journal of Career Planning & Employment, 60, 20-23.
                  Caprino, K. (2017, Aug 21). What not to ask in an initial job interview. *Forbes*.
                          Retrieved from:

https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathycaprino/2017/08/17/what-not-to-ask-in-an-initial-job-interview/?

Career Portfolio: Online Profile & Response Essay due

Oct 16:   **Meaningful Work**
Gallo, A. (2015, Feb 4). How to build a meaningful career. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from: https://hbr.org/2015/02/how-to-build-a-meaningful-career

Lair, D.J., & Wieland, S.M.B. (2012). "What are you going to do with that major?" Colloquial speech and the meanings of work and education. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *26*, 423-452.

Oct 23:   **Project Workshop 2: The Progress Report**
Career Portfolio: Sample Written Work due

Oct 30:   **Work-Life Alignment**
Harvard Business Review IdeaCast Audio (20 min. clip) with Sylvia Hewlett on "Extreme Jobs." Retrieved from: https://hbr.org/ideacast/2006/12/harvard-business-ideacast-21-e.html

Tolentino, J. (2017, Mar 22). The gig economy celebrates working yourself to death. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from: *https://www.newyorker.com/culture/jia-tolentino/the-gig-economy-celebrates-working-yourself-to-death*

Harvey, J.C. (2018, Jul 12). Why this professor of time argues achieving 'work-life balance' is impossible. Forbes. Retrieved from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/janeclairehervey/2018/07/12/why-this-professor-of-time-argues-achieving-work-life-balance-is-impossible/#3b8205ad13d0

Project Progress Reports due

Nov 6:   **Project Workshop 3: Implementation**
Career Portfolio: Self-care Strategies Manifesto due

Detroit Career Fair on Nov 12, 11 am - 2 pm, at Dearborn. Register: https://www.nationalcareerfairs.com/career-fairs/detroit-career-fairs/

Nov 13:   **Project Collaboration work on your own**
The class will not be meeting formally since Rahul will be at Chicago for the Upswell 2019 conference and then at Baltimore for the National Communication Association conference later that week.
Career Portfolio: Sample Oral (Video) Presentations due

Nov 20:   **Project Workshop 4: The Presentation and Final Report**

Nov 27-30: **Thanksgiving Break (No classes)**

Dec 4:   *Project Presentations & Project Reports due*

Dec 10:   **WSU Study Day (No class)**

Dec 11:   *Process Report & Peer Evaluations due*

HAVE A GREAT WINTER BREAK!