

**COM 6250: Organizational Communication
Fall 2017**

Instructor: Dr. Rahul Mitra

Course Time/Days: Mondays, 6-8:30 p.m.

Course Location: 256 Manoogian Hall

Instructor's Office Location: 541 Manoogian Hall

Instructor's Email Address: rahul.mitra@wayne.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-6 pm, and by appointment.

Course Description:

This course provides an entry into the varied and complex world of organizational communication research and practice. We will discuss key theoretical frameworks, the research orientations that they are derived from, and then apply these frameworks to examine contemporary case studies. This is a **writing-intensive** class, and you will be graded on your ability to craft fairly sophisticated case analyses. Moreover, given that ALL organizations involve **working in teams** almost constantly, you will be assigned to work with a specific work group for your final project and for a case discussion assignment.

In order to succeed in this class, it is absolutely crucial that you attend class EVERY day, complete all assigned readings for the day, submit written assignments on time, participate actively in class discussions, and contribute meaningfully to your group.

Learning Outcomes:

Specific learning outcomes for this class include for you to be able to:

1. Trace how key concepts/issues of organizational communication have evolved
2. Understand different epistemological and methodological perspectives to organizations
3. Analyze and outline practical recommendations for contemporary organizations, using the theories and methods learned in class.
4. Facilitate high-level discussions (in-class) pertaining to the topic

PLEASE NOTE UNIVERSITY POLICY: IF YOU ARE NOT ENROLLED AND HAVEN'T ATTENDED MY CLASS BY SEP. 13, THE REGISTRAR WILL ADMINISTRATIVELY WITHDRAW YOU FROM THE CLASS AND YOUR FINANCIAL AID WILL BE ADJUSTED ACCORDINGLY.

Course Materials (REQUIRED):

May, S.K., & Mumby, D.K. (Eds.). (2005). *Engaging organizational communication theory and research: Multiple perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fyke, J.P., Faris, J.L., & Buzzanell, P.M. (Eds.). (2017). *Cases in organizational and managerial communication: Stretching boundaries*. New York: Routledge.

RECOMMENDED Resources:

C.R. Scott., & L.K. Lewis (Eds.) (2017). *International encyclopedia of organizational communication Vols. 1-4*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Available through WSU Library: <http://141.217.1.36/record=b5339633~S47>

Putnam, L.L., & Mumby, D.K. (Eds.). (2013). *The SAGE handbook of organizational communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Website: <http://www.apastyle.org/manual/index.aspx>

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

You can contact the Wayne State University Writing Center at:

<http://clasweb.clas.wayne.edu/writing>

Prerequisites: Graduate standing.

Assignments:

Your grade in this class will depend on the following assignments.

1. Participation & Weekly Essays: 10+20=30 pts.

As graduate students, I expect you to attend EACH AND EVERY class, barring major emergencies and/or illness, in which case you should notify me via email before class. I expect engaged discussions during class, so that you must participate actively, both asking and answering questions. Please also make sure that you are ON TIME for each class. 10 points are allotted on the basis of the professor's impression of your general engagement and participation in class.

A further 20 points will be allotted on the basis of ANY FIVE weekly response essays submitted (5X4=20 pts.; not including workshop days). Your essay should be 2 pages (Times New Roman, font size 12, double-spaced), and analyze the key points of the readings assigned for that week (focus on the **theory-driven readings**, rather than the assigned case study). Your essay may critique, extend, or apply the readings; you should connect the readings to the central theme of the week from the schedule (e.g., "organizational rhetoric," "postmodernism and organizational representation"). Your weekly comments are due at the start of class.

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 1 and 2.

2. Case Discussion: 10+10+10=30 pts.

This is a small group assignment, so that all members will receive the same points for the assignment. Two students (at most three) will sign up to lead the discussion on a case study assigned for a particular week (see highlighted on schedule), using an encyclopedia entry on a related theoretical concept. Your responsibilities include: (1) sourcing and explaining the encyclopedia entry in a 7-10 minute presentation (10 pts.); (2) preparing a 2 page (i.e., front-and-back) handout, summarizing the case study and encyclopedia entry, explaining (briefly) how the selected theoretical concept (and other issues to be discussed in class that day) pertain to the case study, and ending with 5-7 discussion questions for the class (10 pts.); and (3) facilitating a 20 minute class discussion, by posing the preset questions, asking follow-ups, and moderating the discussion (10 pts.).

While you may draw from the discussion questions posed at the end of the case study in the textbook, you should suitably amend/edit these questions to make them “your own,” rather than simply reciting them. Please make sure to sign up for your week to lead case discussions, on the very first day of class.

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 1, 3 and 4.

3. Midterm Exam: 50 pts.

The midterm exam will be held IN-CLASS, so you must bring your laptop with you on the scheduled day. Select a case study (or one will be assigned to you) from the Fyke et al. (2017) textbook. Your task is to write a paper analyzing this case study, drawing from: (1) any ONE of the theoretical perspectives covered in class between 9/25 and 10/16 (i.e., post-positivism, social constructionism, organizational rhetoric, OR critical theory), and (2) any TWO scholarly articles on the topic of your chosen case study, sourced from any of the academic journals listed below (see p. 9 of this syllabus; please ensure that these articles are not already in the syllabus). Your paper should amount to 5-6 pages (Times New Roman, font size 12, double-spaced), and include the following clearly demarcated sections: a one-paragraph *Introduction* of your paper, a brief *Case Summary*, *Literature Review* (overview of the theoretical perspective and two articles used to analyze the case), 3-4 key *Findings* (with detailed examples/excerpts) of your analysis, and 2-3 *Recommendations* for the organizations and/or its stakeholders. Your paper should cite all sources at the end. **This is an open-book exam, but you are not permitted to come with any portion pre-written.**

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 1, 2 and 3.

4. Final Case Paper: 90 pts.

You will undertake the final paper project in teams of 3-4. Select a contemporary organizational case study (i.e., occurring within the last 2 years) on a burning issue of social relevance. Your goal is to collect and analyze publicly available data pertaining to this case study. Your paper should come to 15-20 pages (Times New Roman, font size 12, double-spaced), excluding References.

Required format: Introduction 1-2 pages, Theoretical Overview 3-4 pages, Method (Data Collected and Analysis) ~3 pages, Findings 4-5 pages, Discussion ~4 pages.

Please use sub-headings to clearly demarcate sections and sub-sections, as per APA style. Your Introduction should summarize the paper, and explain WHY your selected case study is important. In your Theoretical Overview, you should review theoretical concepts and literature relevant to the chosen case study. (The Encyclopedia might be a good starting point, but you should cite primary references rather than the encyclopedia entry.) In your Method, describe (in detail) what data you analyzed, why it was appropriate, and how you analyzed the data. The Discussion should address broader implications of your findings, and may include recommendations for the organization studied. At least 70% of your cited References should be by communication scholars, or from the list of approved communication journals on p. 9.

You should select your case study, and start collecting data at the earliest. Your data should comprise of organizational discourse, such as social media posts, website copy and images, video, press releases, books or other texts (e.g., brochures, white papers) produced by the organization. Two workshops will be organized IN-CLASS on 10/31 and 12/5 to help teams go over proper mechanisms of doing research. Your case study must be preapproved by the Instructor.

Paper Plan (due 10/30): 10 pts.: ~2 pages, what you plan on doing and why

Framework (due 12/4): 10 pts.: ~2 pages, focus on findings and discussion

Paper Presentation (on 12/4): 10 pts.: verbal presentation not exceeding 10 min.

Final Paper (due 12/11): 50 pts.

Group-member Evaluations (due 12/11): 10 pts.: to be distributed in-class

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Grading:

To review, your course grade will be determined by:

1. Participation & Weekly Essays: 30 pts.
2. Case Discussion: 30 pts.
3. Midterm Exam: 50 pts.
4. Final Case Paper: 90 pts.

TOTAL: 200 pts.

For all assignments, you will be graded on the following parameters:

- Engaged and active participation
- Clarity of meaning and presentation
- Effective organizing of material
- Persuasiveness of arguments/analysis
- Adherence to set guidelines (e.g., font size, page length, paper organization)

Final grades will be assigned according to a standard scale:

186 – 200	A	93%+
180 – 185	A-	90%+
174 – 179	B+	87%+
166 – 173	B	83%+
160 – 165	B-	80%+
154 – 159	C+	77%+
140 – 153	C	70%+
134 – 139	D+	67%+
126 – 133	D	63%+
120 – 125	D-	60%+
119 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).

Make-up Work and Extra Credit: There is no extra credit for this class. All work must be submitted on time by the set deadline. There is no provision for “make-up work” unless there are very strong extenuating circumstances.

Grade Appeals: The college policy for appealing a final grade can be found at: <http://www.cfpc.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. Research has consistently shown that students taking notes manually (with pen/pencil) both retain information and understand class material better, compared to those using devices for note-taking. For further reading, consider: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/national/wp/2014/08/26/ditch-the-laptop-and-pick-up-a-pen-class-researchers-say-its-better-for-note-taking/>

If you are using tablets and/or laptops, I expect you to be ONLY using them for class-work, otherwise a distracting environment often results.

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

Disabilities: If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services (SDS) 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. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TDD only). 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.

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

Week 1: 9/4: Labor day HOLIDAY

Week 2: 9/11: Review of syllabus; sign-ups for team assignments

Week 3: 9/18: **Organizational Communication Basics**

- M&M Ch. 1: Engaging organizational communication theory
- FF&B Introduction: (pp. 1-6)
- **FF&B Case Study 9: Faith Community Organization**

Week 4: 9/25: **Post-positivism and Organizational Productivity**

- M&M Ch. 2: Post-positivism
- **FF&B Case Study 23: El Sistema**
- Park, S.H., Kim, J-N., & Krishna, A. (2014). Bottom-up building of an innovative organization: Motivating employee intrapreneurship and scouting and their strategic value. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 28, 531-560.

Week 5: 10/2: **Social Constructionism and Organizational Culture**

- M&M Ch. 3 Social Constructionism
- **FF&B Case Study 26: VIP Casino**
- Trujillo, N. (1992). Interpreting (the work and talk of) baseball: Perspectives on ballpark culture. *Western Journal of Communication*, 4, 350-371.
- *In-class assignment: Steelcase HQ, Grand Rapids*

Week 6: 10/9: **Organizational Rhetoric**

Submissions due for Central States Communication Association 2018 (Milwaukee, WI)

- M&M Ch. 4 Organizational Rhetoric
- **FF&B Case Study 43: Big Sky Software**
- 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.

Organizational Communication Mini-Conference: 10/14-10/16 (Athens, OH)

Week 7: 10/16: **Critical Theory & Organizing for Social Change**

- M&M Ch. 5: Critical Theory
- **FF&B Case Study 34: Green Festival**
- Papa, M.J., Auwal, M.A., & Singhal, A. (1997). Organizing for social change within concertive control systems: Member identification, empowerment, and the masking of discipline. *Communication Monographs*, 64, 219-250.

Week 8: 10/23: MIDTERM EXAM (IN-CLASS)

Week 9: 10/30: FINAL PAPER WORKSHOP 1: RESEARCH DESIGN

- PAPER PLAN DUE; DISCUSSION OF DATA COLLECTION
- Instructional videos will be posted online on Blackboard; these MUST be viewed ahead of class: Sarah J. Tracy's "Get your Qual on!" Episodes 1-8 on YouTube

Submissions due for International Communication Association 2018 (Prague, EU)

Week 10: 11/6: Postmodernism and Meaningful Work

- M&M Ch. 6: Postmodern Theory
- FF&B Case Study 12: American Crystal Sugar
- Mitra, R., & Buzzanell, P.M. (2017). Communicative tensions of meaningful work: The case of sustainability practitioners. *Human Relations*, 70, 594-616.

Week 11: 11/13: Feminist Organizational Communication and Work-Life Issues

- M&M Ch. 7: Feminism
- FF&B Case Study 3: Good mom or employee?
- Meisenbach, R., Remke, R., Buzzanell, P.M., & Liu, M. (2008). "They allowed": Pentadic mapping of women's maternity leave discourse as organizational rhetoric. *Communication Monographs*, 75, 1-24.

National Communication Association Conference: 11/15-11/19 (Dallas, TX)

Week 12: 11/20: Structuration & Technology

- M&M Ch. 8: Structuration Theory
- FF&B Case Study 15: JikeChina tele-work
- Barrett, A.K., & Stephens, K.K. (2017). The pivotal role of change appropriation in the implementation of health care technology. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 31, 163-193

Thanksgiving Break: 11/22-11/25: NO CLASS

Week 13: 11/27: Globalization & Organizational Communication

Student Evaluation Tests administered

- M&M Ch. 10: Globalization
- FF&B Case Study 21: Sudanese refugee workers
- Leonardi, P.M., & Rodriguez-Lluesma, C. (2013). Occupational stereotypes, perceived status differences, and intercultural communication in global organizations. *Communication Monographs*, 80, 478-502.

Week 14: 12/4: FINAL PAPER WORKSHOP 2: ANALYZING & WRITING

- Chapter 7 ("Writing the draft") from: Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- PAPER FRAMEWORKS AND PRESENTATIONS DUE

Week 15: 12/11: SUBMIT FINAL PAPER VIA SAFEASSIGN (deadline: 11.59 pm)

List of approved Communication journals

(Highlighted journals especially feature organizational communication research)

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

NCA Journals (<http://www.natcom.org/journals.aspx>)

1. Communication & Critical-Cultural Studies
2. Journal of International & Intercultural Communication
3. Journal of Applied Communication Research
4. Quarterly Journal of Communication
5. Communication Monographs
6. Communication Education
7. Critical Studies in Media Communication
8. Text & Performance Quarterly

ICA Journals (<http://www.icaheadq.org/page/Journals>)

1. Journal of Communication
2. Human Communication Research
3. Communication Theory
4. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication
5. Communication, Culture & Critique

Other relevant journals

1. Management Communication Quarterly
2. Human Relations
3. New Media & Society
4. Environmental Communication
5. Journal of Communication Inquiry
6. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media
7. Health Communication
8. Journal of Health Communication
9. Science Communication
10. Public Relations Review
11. Journal of Public Relations Research
12. Public Relations Inquiry
13. International Journal of Business Communication
14. Political Communication
15. Rhetoric & Public Affairs
16. Rhetoric Review
17. Feminist Media Studies
18. Women's Studies in Communication
19. Journal of Family Communication
20. Communication Research
21. Communication Studies (CSCA – regional)
22. Communication Quarterly (ECA – regional)
23. Western Journal of Communication (WSCA - regional)
24. Southern Communication Journal (SSCA – regional)