

**COM 7150 (Winter 2018)**  
**Micro Approaches to Organizational Communication**

**Instructor:** Dr. Rahul Mitra

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

**Course Location:** 224 Manoogian Hall

**Instructor's Office Location:** 541 Manoogian Hall

**Instructor's Email Address:** [rahul.mitra@wayne.edu](mailto:rahul.mitra@wayne.edu)

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 3-6 pm, and by appointment

**Course Description:**

This course covers communicative processes and behaviors that affect individuals in organizations, with specific attention paid to the type, quantity, and quality of workplace communication at dyadic and group levels (i.e., “micro” levels). The goal is to trace how such micro-level interactions shape broader experiences and organizational norms, while drawing from macro-level institutional structures and social discourses.

Topics covered include: supervision and leadership, teams and groups, co-worker relationships, identity management, and destructive relationships.

For your final project in this course, you will draw on the readings to analyze data pertaining to a research study on experiences of Communication graduate students. The study will specifically focus on themes related to stressful work conditions, social support, and meaningful work. This will help you connect theory with real life experiences on the ground.

**Learning Outcomes:**

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

1. Trace how key issues and themes of organizational communication are shaped by micro-level interactions, practices and discourses.
2. Facilitate high-level discussions pertaining to the topic.
3. Critically assess organizational practices, and apply research-based strategies for meaningful change.
4. Develop knowledge about a focused area of micro-level organizational communication.
5. Produce deliverables (e.g., final paper) to enhance your scholarly development, for submission to academic conferences and journals.

**REQUIRED Texts:**

Sias, P. (2009). *Organizing relationships: Traditional and emerging perspectives on workplace relationships*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

In addition, we will use various academic articles and book chapters (see schedule), made available through Canvas.

**RECOMMENDED Resources:**

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. 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.

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

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

Scott, C.R., & Lewis, L.K. (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> )

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

### **SEE LIST OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION RELATED JOURNALS BELOW**

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>

In addition, 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. In-class Participation & Online Discussions: 35 pts. (10) + (5X5=25)

This graduate seminar will be discussion- rather than lecture-based. Thus, 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 25 points will be allotted on the basis of ANY FIVE weekly online responses (of 10 available), via Canvas (5X5=25 pts.). Your response should be 600-700 words, and analyze the readings assigned for that week. It should address at least two of the readings; in the response, you may *critique, extend, or apply the readings*; you should *also connect the readings to the central theme of the week* (e.g., "supervision and leadership," "careers and meaningful work"). Finally, you should *comment briefly on any*

*other person's online response* for that week (at least 100 words). Your response and comment should be posted by 5.30 pm on the day of class. (**Note:** You should type your online response as a "reply" to my header discussion post for the week, on Canvas.)

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

2. "Construct a Case Study" + Case Discussion: 25 pts.

Select a course topic/date (of 9 available) to create a 2-page (single-spaced, font 12, Times New Roman) narrative case study (look at examples in the Fyke et al., 2017, reference book). Your case study should be followed (on p. 3) by 5-7 discussion questions, which connect the narrative to the underlying theories and readings assigned for that week. On p. 4, you should list and define key theoretical concepts and terms that relevant to your case study (definitions sourced from your readings). You will also be responsible for facilitating an interactive class discussion based on your prepared case, using the discussion questions. You should email the full document (total: 4 pages) to the instructor by 5.30 pm of the assigned date, so that copies can be made for the entire class.

You will be scored on: how well the narrative of your case study hangs together (5); how well the case study addresses readings and theoretical concepts to be discussed that day (5); quality of the discussion questions and theoretical definitions (5); and facilitation of interactive class discussion (10).

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 2, 3, 4 and 5.

3. Pop Culture Assignment: 40 pts.

Analyze an episode of a television series (*Mad Men?*) with an eye toward any TWO topics covered in the course (of total 9 available). You should submit a "mini-paper" (~6 pages double-spaced, font 12, Times New Roman, APA style, with clear headings for different sections) that includes: introductory paragraph, 1-2 paragraphs briefly explaining the episode plot, ~2 pages reviewing relevant literature on the 2 topics you chose, ~3 pages describing the results of your analysis, and a concluding paragraph. Additionally, you should cite at least 10 scholarly works by organizational communication researchers, and/or in the list of approved journals at the end of this syllabus. You should present detailed notes, transcripts, and excerpts while describing the results of your analysis: back up your claims with evidence (i.e., *show, don't just tell!*).

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 1, 3, 4 and 5.

4. Final Paper: 100 pts.

You will undertake the final paper in teams of 3-4. Each group will write a 20-25 page "conference-ready" research paper (APA style, double-spaced, font 12, Times New Roman) culling from a common (qualitative) data set\* that explores the lived experiences of graduate students in the Communication discipline. The specific topic of each group's paper will, however, be different, and you will select your group/topic early on in the semester. As per APA format, your paper should include an abstract (150 words), keywords, and list references. At least 70% of your cited References should be by Communication scholars, or from the list of approved journals. Workshops will be organized in-class to help teams go over proper mechanisms of doing research.

**TIPS:** You should think of the pop culture assignment paper as a smaller, individual “rehearsal” for the final collaborative paper, which should be much more polished, and a viable submission for NCA, or any other communication conference. As per APA conventions, you should have the following sections in your paper. Your Introduction should summarize the paper, say what you’re doing, and establish it’s theoretical and/or practical importance (i.e., *so what?*). In your Theoretical/Literature Overview, you should review theoretical concepts and literature relevant to your paper. In your Methods, describe (in detail) what data you analyzed, why it was appropriate, and how you analyzed the data. In your Results, present your findings, in clearly headlined sub-sections, based on your data analysis; be sure to present examples and excerpts from the data to illustrate your claims (again: *show, don’t just tell!*). Finally, the Discussion should address broader implications of your findings, and may include practical recommendations for universities, students, or any other key actors.

*Front end draft* (Introduction & Literature/Theory Review): 20 pts.: 8-10 pages, plus references cited

*Results Handout:* 10 pts.: 3-4 pages, focus on key findings and discussion points

*Presentation:* 10 pts.: not exceeding 13 min.: focus on rationale for the study, main results with a few examples, and key implications from the discussion section

*Final Paper:* 50 pts.

*Group Evaluations:* 10 pts.

\* The data set comprises of 50 in-depth interviews, ranging from 45-60 minutes. Interview transcriptions will be made available to you via WSU OneDrive, along with the interview protocol and participant demographics. (Pseudonyms are used throughout.)

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 1, 3, 4 and 5.

### Grading:

To review, your course grade will be determined by:

1. In-class Participation & Online Responses: 35 pts.
  2. Case Study Assignment: 25 pts.
  3. Pop Culture Assignment: 40 pts.
  4. Final Paper (Group): 100 pts.
- TOTAL: 200 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 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:

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. 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 (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.

## **READINGS AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE** (Subject to change)

### **Jan 10: Review of syllabus**

### **Jan 17: Micro- approaches: relationships and processes**

Sias, Ch. 1: Organizing workplace relationships

Koschmann, M.A., & McDonald, J. (2015). Organizational rituals, communication, and the question of agency. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 29, 229-256.

Smith, S.A., & Brunner, S.R. (2017). To reveal or conceal: Using communication privacy management theory to understand disclosures in the workplace. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 31, 429-446.

### **Jan 24: Supervision and leadership**

Sias, Ch. 2: Supervisor-Subordinate relationships

Fairhurst, G.T., & Connaughton, S.C. (2014). Leadership communication. In L.L. Putnam, & D.K. Mumby (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 401-424). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zanin, A.C., Bisel, R.S., & Adame, E.A. (2016). Supervisor moral talk contagion and trust-in-supervisor. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 30, 147-163.

### **Jan 31: Teams and groups**

Seibold, D.R., Hollingshead, A.B., & Yoon, K. (2014). Embedded teams and embedding organizations. In L.L. Putnam, & D.K. Mumby (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 327-350). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Silva, D., & Sias, P.M. (2010). Connection, restructuring, and buffering: How groups link individuals and organizations. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 38, 145-166.

Bonito, J.A., Keyton, J., & Ervin, J.N. (2017). Role-related participation in product design teams: Individual- and group-level trends. *Communication Research*, 44, 263-286.

### **Feb 7: Co-Worker relationships: socialization and mentoring**

#### **EPISODE SELECTION FOR POP CULTURE ASSIGNMENT DUE**

Sias, Ch. 3: Peer coworker relationships

Kramer, M.W., & Miller, V.D. (2014). Socialization and assimilation: Theories, processes, and outcomes. In L.L. Putnam, & D.K. Mumby (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 525-548). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Buzzanell, P.M., & D'Enbeau, S. (2014). Intimate, ambivalent, and erotic mentoring: Popular culture and mentor-mentee relational processes in *Mad Men*. *Human Relations*, 67, 695-714.

**Feb 14: WORKSHOP I (Writing Literature Reviews)**

Van Wee, B., & Banister, D. (2016). How to write a literature review paper? *Transport Review*, 36, 278-288.

**Feb 21: Destructive relationships (and organizations)**

Kassing, J., & Waldron, V.R. (2014). Incivility, destructive workplace behavior, and bullying. In L.L. Putnam, & D.K. Mumby (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 643-664). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & McDermott, V. (2008). The constitution of employee-abusive organizations: A communication flows theory. *Communication Theory*, 18, 304-333.

Boren, P. (2013). The relationships between co-rumination, social support, stress, and burnout among working adults. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 28, 3-25.

**Feb 28: Emotions and social support**

Sias, Ch. 4: Workplace friendships

Miller, K. (2014). Organizational emotions and compassion at work. In L.L. Putnam, & D.K. Mumby (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 569-587). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Way, D., & Tracy, S.J. (2012). Conceptualizing compassion as recognizing, relating and (re)acting: A qualitative study of compassionate communication at hospice. *Communication Monographs*, 79, 292-315.

**Mar 7: Careers and meaningful work****POP CULTURE ASSIGNMENT DUE**

Berkelaar, B.L., & Buzzanell, P.M. (2015). Bait and switch or double-edged sword? The (sometimes) failed promises of calling. *Human Relations*, 68, 157-178.

Cheney, G., Zorn, T.E., Jr., Planalp, S., & Lair, D.J. (2008). Meaningful work and personal/social well-being: Organizational communication engages the meanings of work. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 32, 137-185.

Barrett, A.K., & Dailey, S. (2017). A new normal? Competing national cultural discourses and workers' constructions of identity and meaningful work in Norway. *Communication Monographs*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1080/03637751.2017.1372587

**Mar 14: SPRING BREAK HOLIDAY****Mar 21: WORKSHOP II (Qualitative Data Analysis)****FRONT END DRAFT (FINAL PAPER) DUE**

Charmaz, K., & Belgrave, L.L. (2012). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J.F. Gubrium, J.A. Holstein, A.B. Marvasti, & K.D. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (pp. 347-365). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [CHAPTERS 6-8]

### **Mar 28: Identification and identity tensions**

#### **(NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION DUE DATE)**

Cheney, G., Christensen, L.T., & Dailey, S.L. (2014). Communicating identity and identification in and around organizations. In L.L. Putnam, & D.K. Mumby (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 695-716). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tracy, S.J., Myers, K.K., & Scott, C.W. (2006). Cracking jokes and crafting selves: Sensemaking and identity management among human service workers. *Communication Monographs*, 73, 283-308

Barbour, J.B., & James, E.P. (2015). Collaboration for compliance: Identity tensions in the interorganizational and interdisciplinary regulation of a toxic waste storage facility. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 43, 363-384.

### **Apr 4: Work-Life Issues**

Sias, Ch. 5: Romantic workplace relationships

Kirby, E.L., & Buzzanell, P.M. (2014). Communicating work-life issues. In L.L. Putnam, & D.K. Mumby (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 351-374). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Medved, C.E. (2016). The new female breadwinner: Discursively doing and undoing gender relations. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 44, 236-255.

### **Apr 11: External stakeholder relationships**

Sias, Ch. 6: Customer and client relationships

Saffer, A.J., Yang, A., & Taylor, M. (2018). Reconsidering power in multi-stakeholder relationship management. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 32, 121-139.

Mitra, R., & Fyke, J. (2017). Purpose-driven consultancies' negotiation of organizational tensions. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 45, 140-159.

### **Apr 18: RESEARCH SHOWCASE**

#### **RESULTS HANDOUT AND PRESENTATION DUE (FINAL PAPER)**

Sias, Ch. 7: Workplace relationships and society

### **Apr 25: FINAL PAPERS & GROUP EVALUATIONS DUE**

**HAVE A GREAT SPRING/SUMMER!**

### **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)