COMM 4350:001: Communication in Organizations
Fall 2011: TTH 11-12:15pm

Instructor: Dr. Derek Cortez
Office: Bay Hall 3.66
Office Hours: Wednesday 1-4pm; TTH 2-3pm

Course Description:

It is through organizations that members of a society achieve their collective goals – from making laws and building bridges to the local and international trade of goods and services. Organizational communication is the study of how persons accomplish these goals via the ongoing, mutual exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages.

To provide students with a firm grounding in organizational communication theory, while at the same time highlighting the very practical nature of the endeavor, the course outcomes are as follows:

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:
Upon completion of this course, students who conscientiously perform their work will be able to:

1. Explain the relevance of organizational communication today.
2. Demonstrate in writing understanding of organizational communication theory and research.
3. Articulate the ethical issues organizational leaders face today and how to critically evaluate the ethical dimensions of organizational communication.
4. Conduct a participant observation organizational field study.
5. Discover how organizational communication concepts apply to your career choice through information interviewing.
6. Apply organizational communication theory to case studies.
7. Work effectively in a team.

Required Text:


Additional readings will be required throughout the semester.
Grading Scale:

A  90 – 100 %   Excellent: far exceeded all standards
B  80 – 89.4 %   Above average: exceeded all standards
C  70 – 79.4 %   Average: fulfilled all standards
D  60 – 69.4 %   Pass: fulfilled most standards
F  below 59.5 %   Fail: did not meet several minimum standards

Course Assignments:                   Points:
Class Case Studies                        100 Points
3 Exams                                   200 Points
Individual Case Study                    100 Points
Case Analysis                            100 Points

TEAMWORK: This class involves a substantial amount of teamwork. This replicates many workplace situations, particularly in persuasion professions like advertising, marketing, fundraising, development, and PR. It is expected that you will work as an effective team. This involves listening to each other, considering everyone’s ideas in decision making, negotiating differences respectfully, sharing power, documenting all decisions, creating written plans, noting all team members’ responsibilities, doing your fair share of all parts of a project in a timely fashion, creating and sticking to timelines, and resolving any conflicts that arise constructively. Teamwork can be the most exciting aspect of a job, or it can be draining. It’s the quality of each team member’s contribution that makes or breaks the experience. Because a considerable portion of your coursework involves teamwork, you have the power to fire a team member who does not cooperate for the following reasons: failure to attend meetings, failure to complete assignments in a timely fashion, or lack of cooperation at team meetings. To fire a team member, you must follow this procedure: (1) call a meeting to discuss the problematic group dynamics. (2) If you can’t resolve the issue as a team, you must schedule a meeting with me, your professor, and I will facilitate a group problem-solving session. (3) If the problem persists, the team must produce a written document stating the reasons for firing a group member, and there must be a signature from all team members (other than the person being fired) to indicate a unanimous decision. A person fired from a team must complete an alternative
assignment, which consists of a 15-page paper analyzing a persuasive campaign and will earn no more than a C on this assignment.

**WRITTEN WORK:** As a college course, it is expected that you will adhere to professional academic writing standards. *All written work must be typed in 12-point font Times New Roman, black ink, double spaced, one-inch margins on all sides, and stapled on the top left-hand corner.* All assignments for this class will conform to APA 6th edition style conventions. It is your responsibility to obtain the style guide and make sure you know how to cite sources appropriately both in the text and in the reference section. The Bell Library has APA style guides. Some online sources include:
http://rattler.tamucc.edu/elecres/resourceguides/citationstyleguides/CitationStyleGuidesRG.pdf;
http://apastyle.apa.org/;
http://citationmachine.net;
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/

You are also responsible for editing your work and using correct grammar, style, and spelling. When I grade your work, I may circle errors, but it is your responsibility to use writing resources to understand and/or correct the errors so you don’t repeat them in future work. Please remember that I am a communication professor, not a writing instructor. If you want help with your writing, I encourage you to utilize the TAMUCC Writing Center. It is located in the Tutoring and Learning Center, 2nd floor of the Bell Library, room 216. An excellent free source for online writing help is http://www.sentenceworks.com/

**Attendance Policy:**

**Attendance is mandatory.** You begin the class with 100 points for attendance. The first two absences will not penalize you (other than assignments due for the days missed). After two absences, you will be deducted 25 points per absence for the next two absences. Subsequent absences will cost you 50 points per absence.

- Each instance of an absence is considered unexcused unless you can provide documentation verifying one of the following:
  - required military service
  - you are hospitalized
  - funeral attendance for a member of your immediate family
  - a doctor's note indicating a valid reason for your absence
- In order to receive credit for attendance, students must be on time and must remain in class for the entire class period. Attendance may be taken at the beginning, during, or at the end of class. If you do arrive late or leave early, it is your responsibility to see that the records accurately reflect your attendance on that day.
LATE ARRIVAL TO CLASS: I will start this class on time and expect you to be here when it starts. Late arrival disrupts class, distracts your classmates and professor, and deprives you of the course material you missed.

WORK SUBMISSION: A hard copy of your work is due at the beginning of class. The copy you submit should be free of printing errors. Be sure you leave adequate time to make sure your computer and printer are working properly. Make multiple backups of all your work and save frequently to avoid emergencies. I recommend some form of portable memory so you can bring your work to campus and print it out if necessary.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS: Late assignments will NOT be accepted unless you have a documented illness or emergency. I suggest you print out your work 24 hours in advance to leave adequate time to resolve any printing issues.

MISSING COURSE WORK: If you miss an exam or fail to turn in an assignment on time, I will work with you to make up the work only if you have an excused absence. If you have a required court appearance, you can still turn in the assignment on time, or email it to me before the due time and date. To make up an assignment or test, you must have written documentation from the relevant authority. If you must attend a funeral, bring a copy of the funeral program and/or obituary from the paper. If you are arrested, bring the paperwork to prove it. If you are facing serious personal challenges that interfere with your work, please come talk to me and bring documentation to see if the course is manageable for you this semester, or if it is best for you to withdraw or take an incomplete.

COMPETING TECHNOLOGY: No competing audio/visual technology in class. Absolutely no cell phone or IPod use.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Plagiarism is not tolerated. Plagiarism will result in failing the class and possible expulsion from the university. If you copy three words in a row from a source, Internet, or print, you must cite the source using APA guidelines. If you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, come see me.

EMAIL: We will use official TAMUCC email addresses. Email is very convenient, but it is not foolproof. If you do not get a response to an email you sent me, I may not have received it. I often respond the same day, but please allow for a 24 hour response time, as I have many responsibilities away from my computer. Additionally, I do not respond to email during evenings or weekends when I am off work. Please plan ahead rather than emailing me the night or weekend before an assignment is due.
**STUDENT-PROFESSOR COMMUNICATION:** I have an open-door policy regarding student-professor communication for academic or classroom interaction concerns. My office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus and I also make appointments when my hours conflict with your schedule. You can also email me to set up an appointment. Whenever concerns about class, assignments, or your performance arise, I prefer to address them face-to-face rather than through email, as many misunderstandings can develop through email exchanges. Thus, whenever you want to communicate with me, you can email me to set up an appointment, but please wait until we sit down together to express your concerns.

**CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION:**
- Everyone, including your professor, will speak using respectful language.
- Everyone will listen with both heart and mind, and respond accordingly.
- To support full attention on class participation, no electronic devices, including computers, cell phones, or IPods are allowed.
- Be prepared to speak at all times.
- Sleeping, reading, and side conversations are **not** allowed in class.

**GETTING SUPPORT WHEN YOU HAVE A TOUGH SEMESTER:**

**Personal or Emotional Support:** Any one of us can have a problem that comes up that interferes with our ability to concentrate on our work. Fortunately, we have a great support system here at A&M, offering students free counseling. Counselors are professionals paid to listen and understand problems, and help you come up with your own solutions. They are problem-solving facilitators who empower you. They do not tell you what to do. They coach you to make your own decisions. The process of talking about an issue with a concerned professional who maintains the strictest confidentiality can be a great relief all by itself. Finding strategies to manage life’s challenges is a bonus.

I **highly recommend you see a counselor if any of the following affect you:**
- Mental health issues (depression, anxiety, stress, insomnia, alcohol/substance abuse, etc.)
- Time management issues
- Career dilemmas
- Relationship conflicts, abuse, breakup
- If anyone close to you has any of the above issues or problems, I would also recommend you see a counselor if their problem worries or affects you in any way.

**University Counseling Center**
Phone: 361.825.2703
Website: [http://counseling.tamucc.edu](http://counseling.tamucc.edu)
**Academic Support:** TAMUCC has a nationally-recognized Tutoring and Learning Center that offers free peer tutoring on a walk-in basis to current students and assists students with questions and difficulties in a wide variety of different courses and subject matters. The TLC also offers assistance to TSI-liable and at-risk students and houses a computer lab with print stations and scanners.

**Tutoring and Learning Center (TLC)**
Phone: 361.825.5933  
Website: [http://tlc.tamucc.edu](http://tlc.tamucc.edu)

**Career Choice Support:** During college years, some of us worry about making the right career choice. We have an excellent career center to support you with these choices.

**Career Services**  
Phone: 361.825.2628  
Website: [http://career-services.tamucc.edu](http://career-services.tamucc.edu)

Career Services provides employment services such as professional resume development, opportunities to participate in on-campus interviews, workshops to develop job search skills, changes to meet and network with professionals in a particular field of study, job and career fairs, one-on-one career counseling, and an online database of job openings.

**NOTICE TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 361.825.5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

**ACADEMIC ADVISING:** The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 361.825.3466.

**GRADE APPEAL PROCESS:** As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor.
For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Website at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS:**

**Exams**

There will be three exams in this course. The final will be cumulative. These tests will consist of multiple choice and true-false questions. To do well on tests, I strongly suggest you complete all assigned course readings before the class. Take notes in all classes. This keeps you actively engaged in the class as well as providing you with material to study. Go over your notes each night to integrate the material into your own thinking. Lots of small study sessions during the semester are more effective than cramming the night before a test.

**Case Study Description & Guidelines**

By design, you will be an active participant in this course. In addition to classroom discussions and lectures on the state of the field in organizational communication theory and research, you will try your hand at applying this body of knowledge through completing two case studies as described below...

**U. R. Consulting**

“Challenge 2006”

On occasion, premier management consulting firms hold special intensive training sessions designed to allow prospective job candidates (i.e., employees-in-training) to gain on-the-job experience in a low risk, simulated setting. We will apply the same model of learning in order to provide you with a deeper understanding of the concepts we study and how they can be applied to address specific organizational communication problems. The simulated corporation hosting this “Challenge 2006” event is U. R. Consulting. You will assume the role of employees-in-training and I will serve as the Managing Director. Ten times throughout the course, our regular classroom interaction will end early and we will be transformed into U. R.

As part of assuming your roles, two small teams (of 4 persons each) will provide an oral presentation of their analysis of the case study for the day. We will then discuss the issue as a larger group. Whether you are formally presenting that day or not, you will be
expected to answer questions and contribute to the discussion of the case—just as you would if you were a member of a consulting organization. The discussion will be focused on evaluating the competing or complementary analyses of the two teams and offering them feedback and any relevant suggestions. You will be randomly assigned to one of the 10 case studies on the second day of class.

Specific guidelines and instructions for each case study are offered on the next page, including an outline to be used for each case. All of the theoretical concepts needed to address the case challenges are contained in your text and provide opportunity to sharpen your comprehension through application.

The written reports should be approximately 4 double-spaced pages. The oral presentations should be no more than 10 minutes. **It is your responsibility to inform me of your media/technology requirements.**

Specifically, your assignment must include the following elements and headings:

- **Business Challenge** –
  - Enumerates and explains the problems the organization is facing.
  - Also points to the underlying cause(s) of the problem according to course concepts and theories.
  - NOTE: This is called organizational diagnosis.

- **How U.R. Can Help** –
  - Details the (very) specific remedies you suggest the organization implement
  - Indicates why (again, based on concepts and theories you have learned in class) this intervention should be helpful.
  - NOTE: Your “cure” should logically follow from your earlier diagnosis.

- **Value Delivered** –
  - Quantifies specifics of what you expect to happen after the implementation of your intervention based on your knowledge of guiding theory and concepts.
  - NOTE: This is similar to a doctor saying something like “you should expect (blank) after you take this medicine for 3 days.” Organizations always require that consultants specify exactly what they can expect to happen after having paid for their services.

‡ Consider these to be pro-bono assignments.

**Individual Case Study**

In addition to your assigned case study (which involves an oral presentation and a written report handed in during class), you will complete another written case study of your choosing (from among three choices provided on the second class day). This is an individual assignment and will not require an oral presentation or group collaboration.
You will use the same guidelines for this individual paper as with the group presentation/paper. Your paper should be 5-7 double-spaced pages.

**Case Analysis Description and Guidelines**

In order to actively apply what we are learning in class to your own organizational lives, you will provide an analysis of your organization’s culture. To complete this analysis, you must select an organization of which you are (or recently have been) a member and have belonged to for some time.

Your analysis will be based on:

- **The official mission, vision, or values statement or a similar document that defines the organization’s overall purpose.** Include a copy of this document with your paper.
- **Experiences of others in the organization.** Ask two (or more) of your co-workers to describe organizational stories, ceremonies, rituals, or metaphors with which they are familiar. Also, ask them to describe (in their own words), the organization’s mission, vision, or values (depending on which document you chose above).
- **Your own experiences and observations in the organization.** As an organizational member, are there other stories, ceremonies, rituals, or metaphors with which you are familiar? How would you describe the real purpose of your organization?

Using the sources above, take approximately two single-spaced pages to consider the differences and/or similarities between the members’ interpretation of the organization’s values/mission and the organization’s officially-stated values/mission.

Your assignment will include the following elements and headings:

- **Introduction** – Be sure to include (in no particular order):
  - Name of organization that will be used for purposes of analysis. Feel free to choose a pseudonym.
  - Size of organization.
  - Type of organization (social, business, educational, religious, fraternal, etc.).
  - Activities of the organization (what does the organization do?).
  - Mission, vision, or values statement of organization (choose one).
  - A clear, thesis/preview statement of your paper.
- **Perceived Values** – Based on your interviews, give specific examples of:
  - Stories – Describe one or more stories members recounted. What values are emphasized through the stories?
  - Metaphors – What metaphor(s) did people use to describe the organization? Are there competing metaphors?
o Ceremonies – List some of the ceremonies described. What types of ceremonies are they? What values do they seem to reflect?

o Rituals – Describe some of the rituals. What types of rituals are conducted? What values do they seem to reflect?

o How do members seem to describe the mission/vision/values of the organization? (Choose one based on your chosen/included document.)

• Espoused Values –
  o Are members’ perceptions of the mission/vision/values consistent with the formal statement?
  o What are the differences and/or similarities between the members’ perception of the organization’s mission/vision/values and the organization’s official statement of mission/vision/values?
  o What reasons could you find for this similarity or difference (you may refer to Schein’s onion model to address this question)?

• Conclusion –
  o Discuss the implications of these differences/similarities for the overall organization and its members.
  o Conclude your paper with a summary of your findings.
  o Suggest specific areas of improvement for your organization and potential remedies.

COURSE OUTLINE

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<td>8/30</td>
<td>The Changing World of Work</td>
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<td>Defining the Organization</td>
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12/6 Narratives in the Organization  
*Case Analysis Due*

Rdg: Corporate Culture: The Role of Stories (Ritzer)

Rdg: The Leader's Guide to Storytelling (Deming), Intro, Chapter 1

Rdg: Organizational Narratives and Organizational Structure (Browning)

12/8 *Final Exam (11am-1:15pm)*

* Italics represents all due dates for semester assignments.*