

Huntingdon College
Adult Degree Completion Program

COURSE NUMBER: CMST 420
COURSE NAME: Organizational Communication
Spring 2009, Session II, Montgomery

INSTRUCTOR'S NAME: Jerry Morris

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: The purpose of this course is to provide an examination of the taken-for-granted communicative nature of organizational life. The main objective is to familiarize you with the theoretical foundations for the study and practice of communication in organizations. Readings, discussions, and assignments are designed to stimulate critical thinking about the diverse perspectives people bring into organizations. They will also familiarize you to the basic theories, concepts, and issues relevant to the field of organizational communication. This course considers organizational communication to be a complex phenomenon and that communication is at the center of organizational activity; as such, understanding of relevant communication theories and constructs is assumed. Ultimately, this course will help you develop your critical thinking and writing skills about communicating and organizing.

PREREQUISITE: CMST 335 Small Group Communication

TEXT REQUIRED:

Miller, K., Organizational Communication: Approaches and Processes Thompson Wadsworth.
(see Huntingdon College book list for current edition and ISBN)

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Ultimately, the aim of this course is to: (1) provide you with the ability to think critically about the role of communication in – and as constitutive of – organizations; (2) improve your ability to analyze organizing activity and to make you a more effective member of organizations; (3) explore common organizational communication problems and their solutions; (4) integrate theoretical perspectives of organizational communication with current research and contemporary organizational life; and (5) investigate the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that underlie effective communication in and around organizations.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING CRITERIA:

Grading Elements	Percentage:
Chapter Fragments (4 @ 10% each)	40%
Organizational Case Analysis Project	20%
Presentation of Case Analysis	10%
Exams (2 @ 15% each)	30%
Total Points	100%

GRADE POINT EQUIVALENTS – Describe the point range for each letter grade.

A = 90%-100%

B = 80%-89%

C = 70%-79%

D = 60%-69%

F = 00%-59%

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Absences and Tardiness – All students are required to attend the first session. Those who do not attend the first session will be automatically dropped from the course. Students with more than one absence will receive an "F" for the course. Since this class meets only five times, missing a single class meeting is equivalent to missing three weeks of a regular term. If you cannot attend a class you must let the instructor know via email as soon as possible. In case of absences you are responsible for obtaining all handouts and assignments. Tardiness may result in a deduction in your class participation grade. Excessive tardiness may count as an absence.

Participation – Explain your expectations. How will participation be evaluated and how will regular feedback be provided? The collaborative adult learning model requires students to participate and actively engage in the learning process. One way to encourage this is to include participation as part of the grading criteria. Participation is not the same as attendance. Attendance is simply being present in the classroom but does not require the student to do anything. Participation requires students to come to class prepared to actively participate, which makes the classroom experience more meaningful. However, participation is not just speaking out in class. The contributions made by the student should be related to the course content and meaningful to the class discussion.

Late Assignments – Explain whether late assignments will be accepted and what penalty might be imposed if the assignment is late. Also specify what assignments can be turned in late. This will allow the student to make informed decisions.

Accommodation of Special Needs – Huntingdon College makes every reasonable accommodation for disabilities that have been processed and approved through our Disability Services Committee in accord with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. In order to request disability-related services at Huntingdon College, students must self-identify to the Disabilities Intake Coordinator, Camilla Irvin, and provide appropriate and up-to-date documentation to verify their disability or special needs. After the accommodations have been approved by the Disability Services Committee, the 504 Coordinator, Dr. Lisa Olenik, will notify your professor(s) of the committee's decision. If you have any questions regarding reasonable accommodation or need to request disability-related services, please contact Disability Services at (334) 833-4432 or e-mail at disabilityservices@huntingdon.edu.

Academic Honesty – Plagiarism is literary theft. Failure to cite the author of any language or of any ideas *which are not your own creation* is plagiarism. This includes any text you might paraphrase, as well. Anyone is capable of searching the Internet or any printed media; your research paper is intended to broaden your knowledge, stimulate your creativity, and make you think, analyze, and learn. It is not consistent with the College Honor Code, nor with scholarly expectations to submit work which is not the product of your own thinking and research. Severe penalties will result upon the submission of any work found to be plagiarized, including potential failure of the entire course. It is easy and simple to properly cite all sources used in your paper. Take no risks – cite your sources.

Graded Course Assignments:

Chapter Fragments (Due weeks 1-4) – Four (4) times during the term you will be asked to write a fragment. A fragment is a paper of 2 pages (double space with 1 inch margins) that takes a quote (one or two sentences) from the week's reading and argues with it, agrees with it, illustrates it, or extends it. You are expected to integrate data into these papers to support your point. "Data" is loosely defined here as real-life examples lived or observed by you (i.e., from your own or someone else's organizational experiences, from the news, or a book/movie/TV show). Proceed as follow when writing these papers: First, reproduce the quote you chose verbatim (providing the page number as well) at the top of the page; Second, in the first paragraph describe what you think the quote is saying, and then put forward your position regarding the quote (e.g., if you agree with it, but would like to extend it or amend it, say so, say why, and say how or if you disagree with it, say so, say why, and say how it should be changed); Third, in the next paragraph(s) you should provide a real-life example (i.e., data) that helps support your point. Describe the data, and then show how the data supports your argument from the first paragraph; And finally, in the final paragraph return to the quote and summarize your point. In writing these papers, get to the point quickly. You may NOT turn in chapter fragments after we have already discussed the reading in class.

Examinations (During weeks 2 & 5) – The two exams will cover lectures, readings, and in-class activities. The exams are designed to evaluate your ability to (1) recall and define basic course concepts, (2) apply course principles to scenarios provided, and (3) critically compare ideas and be able to distinguish among them. Exams will be a combination of multiple choice, matching, true/false, and matching questions. Some questions will come from the readings that we don't cover in class. Although the exams are not cumulative, you may need to review theories or concepts from earlier in the course – knowledge of this information may influence your ability to answer particular questions.

Organizational Case Analysis Paper (Due week 5) – You will watch the movie based around some sort of organization to analyze organizational life for your final project. This is a large and in-depth analysis of organizational life. After watching the movie, you are to determine which organizational communication theory best understands the organizational life issues presented in the movie. You have three objectives in your analysis of the movie. First, describe the organizational life issues presented in the movie. Do not describe the movie's plot. Second, describe the organizational communication theory you chose to help explain the organizational life issues in the case. Draw on course readings and three additional academic sources to demonstrate your understanding of the organizational communication theory. Third, you need to relate how the organizational theory chosen either solves the organizational life issues in the movie or demonstrates why those issues are present in the movie. The case analysis should be 5 double spaced typed pages with 1 inch margins. Additional guidelines are attached.

Presentations of Case Analysis (Due week 5) – You will present a 5-7 minute presentation of your case analysis research to the class, with a short question and answer session afterwards. Presentations will be graded on how well you are able to describe the organizational life issues presented in your movie, your organizational communication theory, and your analysis of how the organizational theory applies to your movie.

Guidelines for writing papers – All papers should be typed, double-spaced in 12-point font with 1" margins on all sides. A header should indicate your full name and page number at the top right corner of each page (e.g., "Jane Student 1"). All papers and references must adhere

to APA style 5th edition. For assistance on using APA format, please view the APA style crib sheet at <http://www.docstyles.com/archive/apacrib.pdf>. Your papers should integrate specific terminology from the textbook and supplemental readings where appropriate. Finally, you need introduction and conclusion paragraphs, probably three paragraphs in the body of the paper, but that will differ somewhat depending on the content of your particular paper and the specific assignment. Poor grammar, spelling, punctuation, and proofreading will negatively affect your grades. So, write well and proofread to earn above average points. All papers must be printed and brought to class to turn-in in person. No e-mailed papers will be accepted.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week 1: Defining Organizational Communication and Classical & Humanistic approaches to organizing

Reading Assignment: Miller (2009) chapters 1-3
Writing Assignment: Chapter Fragment 1

Week 2: Modern Approaches to Organizing (systems theory, organizational culture, and critical theory)

Reading Assignment: Miller (2009) chapters 4-6
Writing Assignment: Chapter Fragment 2
Exam 1 over chapters 1-6

Week 3: Assimilation, Decision-making, and Conflict in organizations

Reading Assignment: Miller (2009) chapters 7-9
Writing Assignment: Chapter Fragment 3

Week 4: Leadership, Emotions, and Diversity in the Workplace

Reading Assignment: Miller (2009) chapters 10-12
Writing Assignment: Chapter Fragment 4

Week 5: Technological Processes and the Changing Landscape of Organizations

Reading Assignment: Miller (2009) chapters 13-14
Writing Assignment: Organizational Case Analysis Paper
Presentation Assignment: Presentation of Organizational Case Analysis Paper
Exam 2 over chapters 7-14

Organizational Case Analysis Project:

Rational for the project:

A case study is an example or illustration of an organizational problem or challenge that is presented in a story or narrative form with enough detail that allows you to use your knowledge and analytical skills to develop and test alternatives for satisfying the problem presented in the case. There are three reasons why you should view and analyze an organizational communication case study. First, it broadens your perspective on what it means to work. Second, it helps you gain an understanding of work settings or occupations with which you are

unfamiliar. Third, it helps you develop a greater understanding of the ways in which communication is central to getting work done. The purpose of the case is to focus on social actors in an organizational context to examine the role of communication. Your role as an organizational communication student is to look for patterns and anomalies of communication practices. A case study should test your analytical reflection, theoretical analysis, problem analysis, generation of alternative solutions, and solution selection abilities. Taking this class and viewing a case should allow you to make recommendations about the communication problem or challenge describe in the case.

Questions to consider while viewing the movie or reading the case study:

- What is the nature of the relationship between the key characters in the case?
- How do the key characters communicate?
- What are the salient issues and problems of the case?
- What are symptoms of the organizational or communication problem?
- What is the root cause of the organizational or communication problem?
- What elements of organizing and communicating are effective in the case?
- What would each organizational communication theory or perspective suggest as a solution?
- How could you combine or integrate solutions?

Project directions:

You will pick a movie that deals with some organization to analyze for your final paper in this class. Which ever case you choose, it should provide you with different issues of organizational life to contemplate. You have three objectives in your analysis and writing on the case.

- First, briefly describe the organizational life issues presented. **Do not** describe the plot of the movie to me. I probably already know what happens in your case. Instead, use the questions above to help you describe the organizational life issues present in the movie.
- Second, pick and describe the organizational communication theory or concept you choose to help explain the organizational life issues in the case. Draw on course readings and three (3) additional academic sources to demonstrate your understanding of the organizational communication theory or concept.
- Third, you need to relate how the organizational theory or concept chosen either solves the organizational life issues in the case or demonstrates why those issues are present in the case. The last two questions above are designed to get you thinking about this aspect of the assignment.

Format for the paper:

Your paper should be 5-6 typed double spaced pages with 1 inch margins and 12 point font. Please format your paper using APA (5th edition) style for your headings, page numbers, in-text citations, and reference list. There should be a separate section or heading in your paper for the three objectives listed in the “Project directions” section above. I expect your papers to conform to proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation techniques for academic writing. I also expect that your writing will be appropriate for a college level class (solid introductions, transitions, conclusive finishes, etc). Either such errors are not acceptable and will negatively affect your grade. Please staple your papers together before turning them in to me.