

Department of Communication & Theatre

COM 340: ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

“ . . . your class in *Organizational Communication* should be required for every major because the ideas that are presented in that class are practiced every day I go to work.”

*John Walchle, MOCM Grad
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Boise, Idaho*

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Required Texts:

Modaff, D. P., Butler, J. A., & DeWine, S. (2012). *Organizational communication: Foundations, challenges, and misunderstandings* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth. [ISBN: 0-534-61788-3]

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. [ISBN: 0-7619-2608-9]

Required Equipment: Audio recording equipment / capability limited to digital, micro-cassette, or CD .



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Additional Assigned Readings:

Forward, G.L., & Scheerhorn, D. (1997). Reconceptualizing assimilation Research: Communicating identities in postmodern organizations. *The Speech Communication Annual*, 11, 95-116.

Perrow, C. (1973, Summer). The short and glorious history of organizational theory. *Organizational Dynamics*, 2-15.

Weick, K.E. (2001). *Making sense of the organization*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. (Chapter One).

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Organizational Communication (COM 340) focuses on the role and function of human communication, behavior, and expectations in organizational life. A central assumption of the course is that organizations are “collections of conversations” which both shape and are shaped by communicative interaction. Topics addressed include: models/approaches to organizational theory and communication, interpersonal dynamics evidenced in networks, stress and social support, impression management, and issues of diversity.

The course is taught through lecture, discussion, class activities, and a semester project all designed to help you develop critical thinking abilities as they relate to organizational life. Lectures will often introduce material beyond that which is covered in readings and will assume information supplied in the text. Lecture and text should complement, not substitute for each other. It is your responsibility to come to class ready to think, challenge, analyze, and apply the material covered.

II. Course Learning Outcomes:

- (1). To gain sophistication with the terms, concepts, and theories of organizational communication.
- (2). To increase understanding and appreciation of the complexities of communication and organizational life.
- (3). To develop competencies in organizational analysis and change strategies.
- (4). To provide opportunities to improve written and oral communication, interpersonal skills, and conceptual and analytical thinking.

OVERVIEW OF SEMESTER

I. Introduction (weeks 1-2)

- A. Life in Organizations
 1. What do organization members want?
 2. Why communication in organizations matters
- B. Definitions
 1. Defining organizational communication
 2. Characteristics of organizations

II. Theoretical Perspectives on Organization and Communication (weeks 3-6)

- A. Theoretical Perspectives
 1. Functionalist Paradigm
 2. Interpretive Paradigm
- B. History of Organization Theory
 1. Scientific Management/Classical (1910's – 20's)
 2. Human Relations/Resources (1930's – 60's)
 3. Systems Theory (Weick) (1970's – 80's)
 4. Organizational Culture (1980's – 90's)
 5. Critical/Postmodern (1990's - ??)

III. Understanding Qualitative Research (weeks 7-8)

- A. Qualitative Research in Organizations
- B. Understanding and Practicing Qualitative Research Skills
- C. Working with Institutional Review Boards

IV. The Experience of Work (weeks 9-15)

- A. Organizational Socialization and Assimilation
- B. Relationships in Organizations
 1. Information, Networks & Grapevines
 2. Power & Politics
 3. Impression Management and Career Development
- C. Stress, Social Support, & Burnout
- D. Coping with Difficult People

III. ASSIGNMENTS:

(1) Abstract Guidelines: (25 pts)

Objectives: To improve your understanding of a particular aspect of organizational communication.

To provide an opportunity for you to determine the main points and fundamental arguments of a particular author's perspective.

To assist you in developing critical thinking skills by making logical connections between an "outside" reading, text readings, and class lecture.

Choose an article from an academic journal that relates to an area of study in which you are interested. The only requirements are that: (1) the topic area must have a direct relationship to organizational communication; (2) the article must be from an academic journal (preferably a communication journal); (3) it must be at least 10 pages in length, exclusive of bibliography and appendices; (4) it should be an article published (or presented at a conference) within the last 10 years; and (5) it must be an ***empirically-based, qualitative article*** (see the handout on types of journal articles for clues on recognizing a qualitative research article - which can be difficult).

FIRST: At the top of the page (do not use a separate title page), after your name, class, date, and assignment, please include all of the following: author of the article, year, title of the article, title of the journal, volume number, and page numbers ***in proper APA format***. (Check the examples provided in class or look for the APA manual in the reference section of the library).

SECOND: The body of the abstract should include the following:

- (a) Present the central idea, thesis or central problem(s) which the author is attempting to address. Why is the thesis or central idea important to the study of organizational communication? Why is it, or is it not, particularly relevant to the study of human communicative behavior?
- (b) Describe the way the study was carried out. Who were the subjects? What variables were measured or issues evaluated?
- (c) Clearly summarize the findings/results presented by the author in response to the hypothesis, research question, or problem(s) presented. What conclusions did the author draw? **BE VERY SPECIFIC IN PRESENTING THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY.** This should be the major (longest) section of your abstract.

- (d) Does the author do an adequate job of addressing the problem(s)? Why or why not? Are there any inconsistencies or gaps in the argument/solution? What practical difference does (could) this make?

Please organize your abstract in four parts corresponding to the four issues noted above. Clearly indicate the structure of your essay by including the letters A, B, C, and D at the beginning of the appropriate segment.

THIRD: Make a complete and clearly readable photocopy of the article on 8 ½" X 11" sheets. Your abstract should be typed, double-spaced and two pages in length. Your abstract should be stapled on top of the copy of the article.

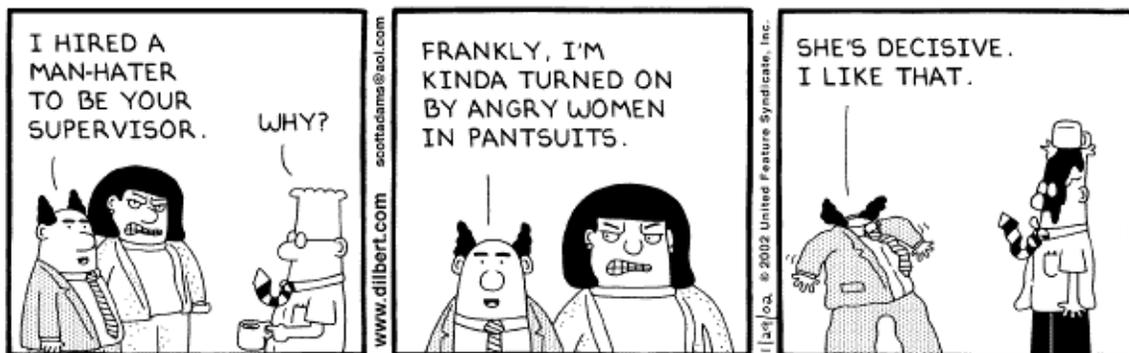
(2). Presentation: Dealing with Difficult People workshop (50 pts)

Each class member (team) will choose a category of “difficult persons” and prepare and deliver a 20-minute training workshop on that topic (no more than ½ of your time should be spent delivering content). Personality types include: Hostile – Aggressive, Complainers, Unresponsive, Super-Agreeables, Negativists, Know-it-Alls, and Indecisive Stallers (other categories may be selected in consultation with the professor).

Your presentation must utilize PowerPoint and should cover the following:

- a. A description of the behavior
- b. Explanation and of the underlying motivational dynamics.
- c. Suggestions for coping with this type of person.
- d. An extended, personal example of how to use your strategy.

Fold one 8 ½ X 11" piece of paper so that it forms a four-page, interactive (fill-ins., word search, crossword, etc.) summary of your presentation and make copies for each class member. In addition, incorporate multi-media (transparency, video, music, etc.) *and appearance counts*. Remember, it is your responsibility to check equipment **BEFORE** class starts so you are familiar with how it operates. **Always plan a back-up procedure in case of equipment failure!**



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(3) **Semester Research Project: Topic Analysis Part I.**

Each research team of 2-3 students must turn in a short paper (approximately 3 – 4 pages) as the first phase of the semester research project (see below). This first paper should only include two parts: First, an introduction, including an overview of the topic being analyzed. Second, the perspective/metaphor the organization seems to have adopted. The overview should include things like the name of the organization, major products or services, organizational structure (including number of levels, number of employees at each level, publicly traded or privately owned, income, single or multiple locations, etc) and your formal role in the organization, if you have one. (This project will be greatly facilitated if you are, or have been, a member of this organization although this is not required if you have other means of entry into the organization of interest).

Semester Research Project: Final Version.

The paper requires you to employ a qualitative methodology utilizing interviews. You will analyze the organization identified above in terms of: (1) the formal and/or informal structure of the organization; (2) some in-depth issue related to this class (e.g., assimilation, power and politics, stress, group experience, etc.) and (3) assessment and recommendation for change. Of course, for each theme communication should be your focus. The use of at least 20 sources (your texts included) is expected; the use of additional sources is encouraged and rewarded. Papers should be between 15 and 20 pages—not including a reference page and other supplemental material in the appendix. ***Plan to create at least one taxonomy in relation to a research question and include at least one “cause map” in your paper to illustrate a key organizational dynamic, which should be referenced and discussed in the paper itself.***

(A) Grading Scale

A (90-100%) Exceptional Scholarship – initiative exceeding assignments, outstanding achievement.

B (80-89.9%) Superior Scholarship – some initiative, work completed in superior manner, timely, effective.

C (70-79.9%) Good Average Scholarship – work completed in satisfactory manner, consistent with requirements.

D (60-69.9%) Passing Grade – but work does not meet all requirements in acceptable manner.

(B) Grading Policy: The grading scale above represents a baseline for evaluation. Although grading criteria will never be more stringent than the percentages printed here, I may choose to adjust points upward if circumstances warrant.

(C) Quizzes: I reserve the right to give ***unannounced*** quizzes on assigned readings and lecture throughout the semester. These will typically take place at the beginning of the class period and cannot be made up after the fact. However, you will be allowed to drop your two lowest quiz scores.

IV. Assignment	DUE ON:	* Points	Your Score
Abstract	_____	25	_____
Exam 1	_____	80	_____
Class Presentation	_____	50	_____
Case Analysis (Part I)	_____	25	_____
Exam 2	_____	135	_____
Case Analysis (Final)	_____	150	_____
Quizzes on Readings / Lecture		50	_____
Excess Absences (Minus)		(_____)	
Activities Not Completed (Minus)			
<hr/>			
*TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE (Actual points subject to change.)			515 POINTS

(C) Grading Challenges

If you believe an error has been made in an assignment or exam that adversely affects your grade, do not hesitate to bring it to my attention. However, in an effort to avoid confusion, you must (a) document the error in writing, (b) state why you think it is an error, and (c) suggest what you think should be done to rectify the error (in cases where this is not obvious).

This must be done within 1 week of an assignment/exam being returned. These matters will be dealt with promptly and fairly. (If an error has been made which benefits you, it does not need to be reported).

(D) Academic Misconduct

Please be aware that I consider cheating/plagiarism of any kind to be a serious breach of academic and moral norms. I will (and have) reported students I believed to be guilty of cheating. Every effort will be made to protect the integrity of the academic enterprise. If you are unsure about what activities are acceptable or unacceptable, please consult with the instructor.

IV. GENERAL POLICIES:

- a) All assignments must be typed (double-spaced, 8 ½ X 11” paper, 260-290 words per page in Times New Roman font only) unless otherwise instructed. Use the APA style guide where necessary. In addition, assignments are due at the beginning of class on the appropriate day. Assignments turned in past due will be accepted but will be penalized for lateness (usually 10% per calendar day). Papers should be secured with a staple or binder clip in the upper left corner (no cover or folders, please).
- b) Attendance will be taken in every class (you are permitted 2 absences without penalty). This means excused and unexcused. If you have an urgent medical or personal need to miss class, you should inform the instructor, otherwise, you are free to arrange your schedule according to your own priorities (e.g. if you are sick and miss 2 classes, there is no problem, no penalty. If you have not missed any classes and decide you just don't feel like getting up that day, again no penalty unless you miss more than 2 classes total). Classes in which you come late or leave early will count as a ½ absence. If you arrive after the roll is called, be sure to inform the instructor after class. Ten points will be deducted from your end of semester point total for every absence beyond those allowed.
- c) **Technology in the classroom: The routine use of technology during class (including but not limited to laptops, cell phones, IM, etc.) is NO LONGER permitted in class. Research indicates that those who take notes on a laptop computer do more poorly on exams than those who hand-write their notes. In addition, despite assurances to the contrary, students continue to violate agreed upon uses of technology in the classroom. Individual exceptions may be possible after consultation with the instructor.**
- d) You must be present in class when you are scheduled to present in order to receive credit - no exceptions, so please do not ask (barring serious illness or tragedy.) Also, please note that appearance always counts when you present before the class and is an integral aspect of perceptions of credibility. Dress as though you expect to be taken seriously.
- e) **GROUP EXPERIENCE:** Almost everything done “in the real world” is done in a group context. The ability to manage group experience is one of the most often mentioned skills employers look for in a college educated person. This class is another opportunity for you to practice effective group management skills and techniques. *It is your responsibility to figure out who you can / should work with in a semester-long project and manage the relationships, tensions, demands and stress of a collaborative assignment.*

- f) Evaluation of Group Members: Due to a phenomenon known as “social loafing” (where a group member may slack off assuming others will make up for their negligence); group members will be given an opportunity to evaluate their group member’s relative contribution to the finished product. Ordinarily all group members receive the same grade on this project. However, if contributions are VERY lopsided (defined as 1 SD or more on a class z-score), the “social loafer” will have his/her grade lowered 1 full letter grade for each SD below the mean (e.g., a grade of “B” would become a “C” for 1 SD below the class mean and a grade of “D” for 2 SD’s below the class mean). ***Choose your group members wisely and manage the experience proactively throughout the semester!***
- g) Never turn in your only copy of anything – always keep a copy for your records.
- h) For a three credit class the professor has a right to expect a minimum of 1 to 2 hours preparation outside of class for each hour in class. You are encouraged to “own” your own educational process, plan your schedule carefully, and consult with the instructor frequently.

*“The significant problems
we face cannot be
solved at
the same level
of thinking we
were at
when we
created them.”*

--- Albert Einstein

COM340: Organizational Communication

Research Paper Guidelines

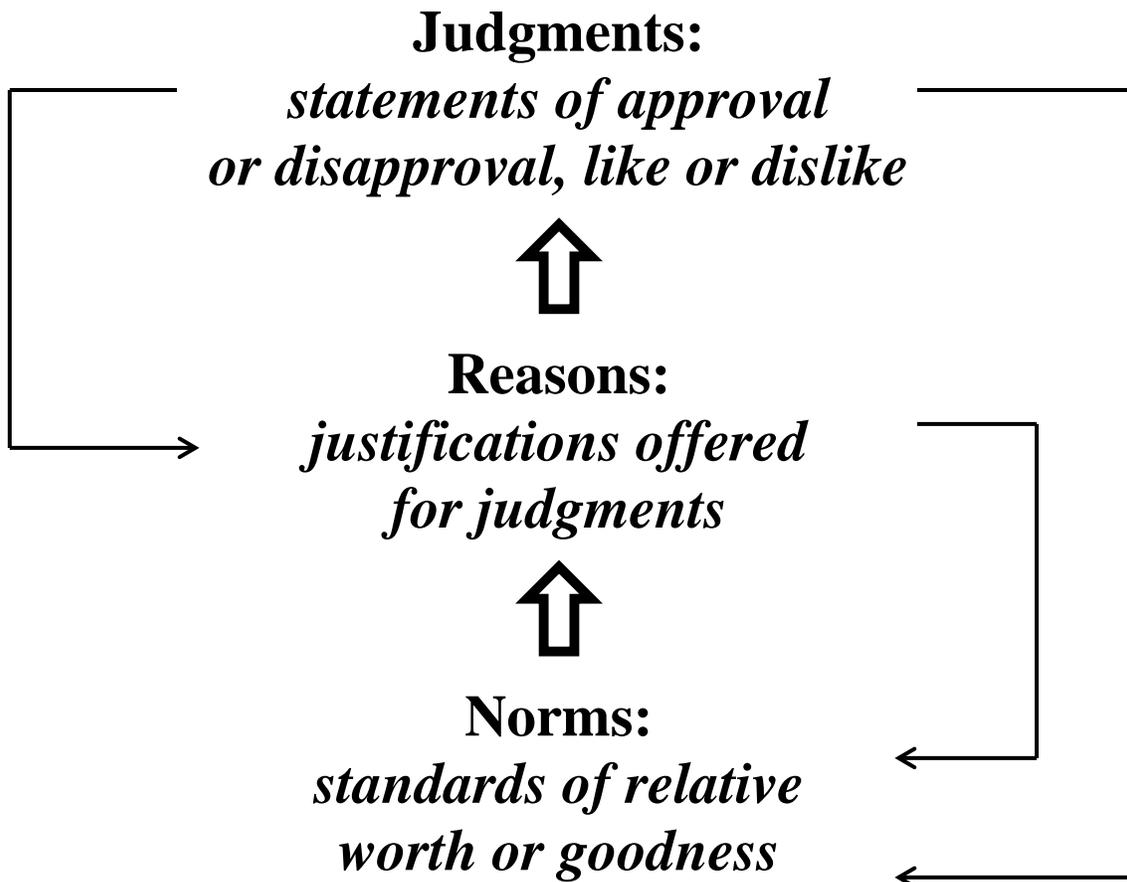
All projects should contain the eight (8) basic formatting elements listed below. Remember to use 12 pt. Times New Roman font only and follow APA 6th Edition (found in the reference section of the library) guidelines unless otherwise directed.

1. **TITLE PAGE:** Header and page number, running head, title, author and affiliation, date, and purpose of submission at the bottom of the page.
2. **ABSTRACT:** Statement of the problem/topic, procedure, and results (usually between 75-150 words in one block paragraph format).
3. **INTRODUCTION:** Background and statement of the problem (including key terms), goal and justification of the research, and any assumptions you bring to the topic.
4. **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:** Summary and analysis of previous research on the focus of your project, constitutive definitions of key variables, end this section with specific research question(s).
5. **METHODOLOGY:** Research setting, subjects, procedure for the protection of human subjects, procedures, and timing.
6. **RESULTS/DISCUSSION:** Characteristics of sample participants. Include a discussion of your findings in terms of implications, importance, and usefulness organized by your RQ's. Study limitations and suggestions for future research, and a final conclusion with suggestions for improvement.
7. **APPENDICES:** One blank Informed Consent Form, interview schedule, cause map, and charts/graphs if any, etc.
8. **BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Bibliography is to include the listing for all indirect notations and direct quotations. Please cite all resources in appropriate APA bibliographic form.

Notes: **DO NOT** use plastic covers, binding, folders or any other such encumbrances. The paper should be secured with a small binder clip in the upper left corner.

Never hand in your only copy of anything.

A Model of Critical Judgment



COM340 Group Research Project Evaluation

Print Your Name Here: _____

Directions: *In an effort to estimate the relative contributions of your research partners, please make the following two evaluations:*

- a. Rank your research partners below in terms of their contribution/importance to your finished project. Use the following key in your assessment.

**KEY: 1 = Most important; 2 = Somewhat important; 3 = Less important;
4 = Least important**

NOTE: DO NOT rank or rate yourself. If your group has a total of three members including yourself; you will only be rating the other two. If your group has four members total, you will be rating the other three; five total, you will rate only the other four.

- b. A completed project equals 100%. Divide this 100% among your partners (again DO NOT include yourself in this distribution):

Member 1: _____ %

Member 2: _____ %

Member 3: _____ %
(If needed)

Member 4: _____ %
(If needed)

Total* 100%

* When added together this number must equal 100%.

GENERAL NOTES ON PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

APPEARANCE: Your physical appearance ALWAYS counts. You should be clean, neatly groomed, and dressed in a way that suggests you expect to be taken seriously. At a minimum this means a plain shirt (white), tie, and dress slacks for men and dress, skirt, or dress slacks and blouse for women. Obviously, no hats, tennis shoes, shorts, gum chewing, etc.

DELIVERY: The key to good delivery is PRACTICE both for yourself personally and your partner(s) if you are presenting as a team. Try to be aware of any tendency toward non-fluencies (um, aha, like, you-know) that interrupt the flow of your speaking and draw attention (negative) to themselves and work hard to minimize them.

Practice an extemporaneous type of delivery and do not read to your audience.

You want an easy, efficient flow between you and your partners that can only be achieved by much practice.

VISUAL AIDS: Use them! Video/audio clips should be carefully cued so that there is a minimum of “dead space.” Also, set up (explain) why you are using the clip and/or what it will illustrate.

Familiarize yourself with all of the equipment that you will use including doc cam/ projector, TV/DVD/VCR, laptop computer, data projector, CD player and/or any other electronic equipment that may be a part of your presentation. Note: It is your responsibility to make sure that all necessary equipment has been reserved either by checking with the professor or directly contacting Media Services.

Make sure that all projected images are CENTERED on the screen and that lighting and window shades are modulated to create the correct amount of ambient light in the room.

Overhead transparencies should contain as few words as possible (do not simply make transparencies of handouts, which contain too much prose). Remember the “6 X 6” rule – 6 words across, 6 lines down! Key words or phrases are ideal for use on overheads. Every overhead should have a title (minimum of 36 - 48 pt. font) and the remaining text should utilize 18 – 24 pt. font. Eliminate all extraneous material and use color, if appropriate, when copying something from a magazine or book for use on a transparency.

What Do Employees Want?

<i>Potential Motivators</i>	<i>Average Employee Ranking</i>	<i>What Managers Think Their Employees Want</i>	<i>Your Personal Ranking</i>
Money	_____	_____	_____
Interesting Work	_____	_____	_____
Appreciation	_____	_____	_____
Job Security	_____	_____	_____
Being an 'Insider'	_____	_____	_____
Promotion	_____	_____	_____
Sympathy for Problems	_____	_____	_____
Working Conditions	_____	_____	_____
Loyalty from Company	_____	_____	_____
Tactful Disciplining	_____	_____	_____

Directions: Rank items in order of importance with 1 being the most important and 10 being the least important of the items listed.