

## **BUS 359 – Organizational Communication Syllabus**

**Objective:** The purpose of this syllabus is to guide the participant in the requirements, demands, logistics and expectations of this course.

**Getting Help:** To receive technical assistance on issues related to WebCT contact:  
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### **Welcome from your instructor ~**

Welcome to BUS 359 - Organizational Communication. This course is designed to acquaint you with various approaches both scholars and practitioners have used to study organizational structures, processes, and values and how these affect communication. Increasing your understanding of organizations allows you the opportunity to observe communication interactions within your organization in a more sophisticated fashion. Increasing your understanding of organizational communication strategies allows you to interact more effectively. I have worked in the field of education at both the secondary and postsecondary levels for the majority of my professional life. As a curriculum specialist, faculty member and administrator I have always been amazed at the complexity of the communication process within the educational setting. As a result both my Master's Degree (Michigan State University) and Doctorate (Michigan State University) are in organizational communication

Because of the importance I place on the role of communication within organizations, the focus of my own research has centered on communication within the educational setting. I have looked at how the type, source and content of communication relate to stress reduction in K-12 teachers. While working as an evaluator on a project that required collaboration between university and community partners, I researched the impact of collaboration on the decision-making processes among participants. With other colleagues I have studied leadership roles within educator-community collaborations.

One of the reasons I chose to teach this course is to, hopefully, expand your understanding of organizations and, specifically, how communication in all its various modes affect and is affected by our interactions within organizations. I hope this is a course you enjoy, are challenged by, and leave feeling you have grown in your understanding of the organizational world.

Please feel free to contact me with questions at [star@rockymountains.net](mailto:star@rockymountains.net) or at the address given in the syllabus.

-Sandra M. Starnaman

**Credit Hours:**

Three Semester Hours

**Required Textbook:**

Miller, K. *Organizational Communication: Approaches and Processes* (5 ed.), Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009. ISBN 13: 978-0-495-56551-2

**Catalog Description:**

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the theories and practices associated with communication within and between organizational entities.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

The student will:

- Identify organizational communication processes associated with various approaches to organizational structure and processes.
- Identify the organizational communication theories and processes associated with organizational assimilation, decision-making, conflict management and change and leadership processes.
- Identify the organizational communication theories and approaches associated with the processes of emotion, diversity, technology and change within organizations.
- Apply the theories, approaches and processes to specific examples.
- Analyze case studies using the appropriate theories, approaches and processes.
- Make judgments about the appropriate uses of a particular approaches, theories and processes.

**Course Requirements:**

Each of us is involved in many organizations during our lifetime. We learn about the organizations through a variety of communication mechanisms. The organizational chart tells us about the official reporting structure. Handbooks tell us about the rules for working within the organization. These, however, provide us only surface information.

This course is designed to address those concepts, theories and approaches that have previously and more currently been used to study communication within organizations. Communication is the primary mechanism that we use to understand or make sense of the complex world in which we live. Dr. Miller writes that “Nowhere is this complexity more

apparent than in consideration of communication processes or in consideration of organizations, institutions, and social groupings.” (pg. 1)

This course is broken down into four modules. Each module is aligned with specific chapters in the text. Modules 1 and 2 consider **approaches** to the study of organizational communication.

- Module 1 covers chapters 1, 2 and 3. It addresses the challenges of organizational communication and three traditional approaches to organizational communication (i.e., the classical, human relations and human resources approaches).

- Module 2 covers chapters 4, 5, and 6. It looks at three contemporary approaches to the study of organizational communication (i.e., systems, cultural, and critical approaches).

- Modules 3 and 4 consider **processes** associated with organizational communication. Module 3 covers chapters 7, 8, 9, 10. In this module we will address some of the more enduring processes (e.g., organization assimilation, decision-making, conflict management, change and leadership) associated with organizations and the role of communication in these processes.

- Module 4 covers chapters 11, 12, 13, 14. As the world around us changes there are emerging processes that need to be integrated into our study of organizational communication (e.g., emotion, diversity, technology and the changing landscape of organizations).

**Grade Distribution and Scale:**

In alignment with ASC academic policies, no D may apply to a major or minor field.

**Grade Distribution:**

Exam #1	50 points
Exam #2	50 points
Exam #3	50 points
Exam #4	50 points
Case Study #1	100 points
Case Study #2	100 points
Case Study #3	100 points
Case Study #4	100 points
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>600 points</b>

**Scale:**

600 – 550 = A

549 – 500 = B

499 – 450 = C

349 – 300 = D

299 and below = F

**Course Instructions**

Your understanding of the content of this course will be assessed using both examinations and case studies. These are designed to measure your understanding, application and analysis of the course content.

After you read the chapters in a module, you should take the exam by click on the Assessment tab in the left-hand navigation bar and choosing the module exam. Use your exam preparation to help you identify the information necessary to also address the case study questions. I should receive the case study within a two-week period after you complete the exam.

**Examinations:**

The exams include true/false, multiple choice and short essay questions. This approach is designed to address the test taking strengths of different students. You will take your assessment through the Assessment tab on the left. Do not begin any exam until you are completely ready to take it and have completed the required tasks for that module. Once you start, you must finish it in the allotted time. Only documented technical issues will allow for the exam to be reopened for you. Be sure to click SAVE ALL before clicking SUBMIT.

**Case Studies:**

For each case study, you should choose a case that corresponds to a topic that you find particularly interesting or important to the study of organizational communication.

Your paper should address a Case Study included at the end of the one of the chapters covered in each module. In your paper, you should fully answer the Case Analysis Questions presented with the case study. In answering the questions you should:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the relevant conceptual issues by fully defining and explaining relevant terms and arguments.
- Apply those relevant concepts to the case by citing specific issues from the case that illustrate the theoretical concepts or arguments.

Your goal is to provide usable, and perhaps, creative suggestions for the case that are based on relevant theory and research. Each case study should be 4-5 pages long, double-spaced in a font no larger than 12 pt., Times New Roman. Case studies should be typed, if possible. If you do not have access to word processing equipment, your case studies should be neatly and legibly written. The following rubric will be used in grading your case study. You will submit your written assignment through the Assignment tab on the left. If you have to hand-write your assignment you may scan it and submit it through the Assignment tab or send it by mail to your instructor. Grading turn-around time will be longer for those sent through the mail.

<b>Categories</b>	<b>100% of Points</b>	<b>80% of Points</b>	<b>60% of Points</b>	<b>40% of Points</b>
<b>Clarity and Accuracy of Analysis-30 points</b>	The analysis was clearly stated. The student expanded on the topic and all questions were accurately answered. (30 points)	Analysis showed understanding of the issue and questions were answered accurately. (24 points)	Analysis lacked clear definition of the case study or was inaccurate. (18 points)	Analysis was weak and answers to questions were weak or missing. (12 points)
<b>Application of Concepts &amp; Theories-30 points</b>	Application of concepts and theories was complete (i.e., student recognized all points for which the concepts and theories were applicable) and thorough (i.e., student completely addressed the referenced theories and concepts). (30 points)	Concepts and theories were clearly stated. Student recognized and responded to most of the relevant concepts and theories. (24 points)	Application of concepts and theories was understood and marginally addressed. (18 points)	Theories and concepts were addressed sparingly or not at all. (12 points)

<b>Application of Concepts &amp; Theories to Problem Solutions- 30 Points</b>	Solutions to case study problems were complete, accurate and closely linked to respective theories and concepts. (30 points)	Solutions to case study problems were clearly stated and broadly linked to respective theories and concepts. (24 points)	Solutions to case study problems lack clear application to relevant issues and concepts. Theories marginally addressed. (18 points)	Solutions to case study problems were inaccurate, weak or missing. (12 points)
<b>Grammar &amp; Spelling- 10 Points</b>	No errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. (10 points)	1-3 errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar. (8 points)	4-5 errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar. (6 points)	More than 6 errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar. (4 points)

### Study Strategies:

Independent study can be one of the best of all instructional modes or one of the most challenging. As an instructor I have the enjoyment of working with each of you one on one. This allows me to answer your specific questions. It allows you to explore the course topic to its fullest. The challenge is that you need to be a disciplined student. It is easy to put off your assignments or deal with the course content in a piecemeal way as the assignments or content are not tied to specific class meetings. The following strategies may help you in successfully completing this course:

- Set up a specific time for “class”. Allow enough time to accomplish a specific amount of work (i.e., read a chapter and answer study questions for the exam)
- Align the course expectations. The course requirements (i.e., readings, case studies and exams) are not separate from each other. They build on each other.
  - Before reading the chapters in a module, read and familiarize yourself with the case study options and the exam questions.
  - Now read through each chapter in the module.
  - Go back through the chapters looking for the specific information needed to address the case studies.
  - Finally, go back through each chapter and answer the study guide questions
- Study for the exam. You have been provided with a study guide to direct your attention to key concepts and reoccurring themes. Please note that the study guides do not necessarily address every item that could be on the exam.

- Take the exam.
- Choose and write your case study following the case study instructions.
- Go on to the next module

**Schedule:**

<b>Readings</b>	<b>Exam</b>	<b>Case Study</b>
<b>Module 1</b>		
Chapter 1: The Challenge of Organizational Communication Chapter 2: Classical Approaches Chapter 3: Human Relations and Human Resources Approaches	Exam #1: Chapters 1, 2, 3	Case Study #1
<b>Module 2</b>		
Chapter 4: Systems Approaches Chapter 5: Cultural Approaches Chapter 6: Critical Approaches	Exam #2: Chapters 4, 5, 6	Case Study #2
<b>Module 3</b>		
Chapter 7: Assimilation Processes Chapter 8: Decision-Making Processes Chapter 9: Conflict Management Processes	Exam #3: Chapters 7, 8, 9 10	Case Study #3
Chapter 10: Organizational Change and Leadership Processes		
<b>Module 4</b>		
Chapter 11: Processes of Emotion in the Workplace Chapter 12: Organizational Diversity Processes Chapter 13: Technological Processes Chapter 14: The Changing Landscape of Organizations	Exam #4: Chapters. 11, 12, 13, 14	Case Study #4