

# CMST 3250: Organizational Communication

Spring 2016

Monday & Wednesday, 12:30 - 1:45

Merrill-Cazier Library 411

Instructor: Matthew L. Sanders, Ph.D.  
Office: Old Main 202C  
Office Hours: W 9:00 - 11:00 and by appointment  
E-mail: [matt.sanders@usu.edu](mailto:matt.sanders@usu.edu)  
Office Phone: (435) 797-8409 (my voicemail is sent directly to my email)

## Required Texts

- All course readings will be made available on Canvas.

## Course Description and Objectives

*Communication is the lifeblood of the organization's functions, the thread that ties the system together, the force that pervades the organization, and the building agent that cements all relationships.*

*- Gerald Goldhaber (1986)*

CMST 3250 is a course about participating in the process of organizing. Whatever your goals, the knowledge you gain from this class will help you make sense of how communication is central to the organizational experience. Organizational communication, as a field of study, analyzes how the actions of people inside and outside organizations are coordinated and controlled to achieve collective outcomes; it is also concerned with the ways individuals are shaped by their interactions with the organizations around them. Rather than offer a set of skills that allow you to fit into the world of work, this course will attempt to show how communication is key to understanding how organizations work; this understanding can enhance your ability to engage with all sorts of organizations. Only when we understand how organizations work can we change them and control our own experiences within them.

In this course, we will examine the ways people communicate in organizational contexts and the ways in which communication creates and sustains organizations. More specifically, the goals of this course are to:

- Promote active critical thinking about the role of communication in—and as constitutive of—organizations.
- Improve your ability to analyze organizing activity and to make you a more effective member of organizations.
- Explore common organizational communication problems.
- Integrate theoretical perspectives of organizational communication with current research and contemporary organizational life.
- Investigate the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that underlie effective communication in organizations.

## Teaching Philosophy

I believe good teaching and learning come from engaging real-life situations and experiences. Therefore, I do not lecture, and my teaching requires you to go beyond the textbook as you study and prepare. I will ask you to examine your own experiences and share them when appropriate, participate in group projects, and engage in experiential learning as we examine a variety of topics. If you are not comfortable with this approach to teaching, I encourage you to find another course that will better meet your needs.

The purpose of meeting together as a class is to enable you to have experiences and conversations that you cannot get on your own. In other words, class will not be a review of what was read in the textbook. Consequently, there are two kinds of work I need you to do in order for this class to be successful. First, do the assigned reading. A study guide is provided for each reading highlighting those concepts and key ideas that I want you to know. Second, do all preparation assignments, study guides, and actively participate in class. This will enable us to have conversations and activities that move us beyond the readings.

In addition, my goal in this class is not just for you to learn a set of concepts and discuss a set of issues. I am most interested in helping you develop a certain way of thinking about communication and organizations. It is this more sophisticated type of thinking that will come from our work together that can enable you to become a different kind of person – more capable, understanding, aware, and competent.

## Course Assignments and Assessment

*Grading.* Please note that the grade of A is given for consistently excellent work that demonstrates an in-depth understanding of all course materials. B's are given for work that demonstrates instances of excellence with a very good understanding of course materials. C's are given for work that demonstrates a consistent satisfactory competence in course materials. D's are given for incomplete work, missed assignments, too many absences, etc. Please talk with me for further understanding of the grading criteria. If you have questions or concerns throughout the semester in regards to your grades please visit with me.

Course evaluation is based on the following assignments:

Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%
Organizational Comm. Analysis	30%
Participation	10%

Grade assignments will be as follows:

<b>A</b>	93% and above	<b>C</b>	73 – 76%
<b>A -</b>	90 – 92%	<b>C -</b>	70 – 72%
<b>B +</b>	87 – 89%	<b>D +</b>	67 – 69%
<b>B</b>	83 – 86%	<b>D</b>	63 – 66%
<b>B -</b>	80 – 82%	<b>F</b>	62% and below
<b>C +</b>	77 – 79%		

## **Organizational Communication Analysis (30%)**

You will be required to conduct an organizational communication analysis of an organization or group. Detailed instructions for this assignment will be provided during the semester.

## **Exams (30% each; 60% total)**

The exams will cover all readings and activities from the course. The format of the exams will be announced in class.

## **Participation (10%)**

Participation is an essential component of individual and organizational success. You cannot be successful in this class or in any organization without participating. My perspective on participation is based on the “Law of the Harvest.” The law of the harvest simply means you cannot plant corn in August and expect to eat it before winter. Successful participation in this class means doing what is necessary each day to ensure success. The several elements of your participation grade are outlined below:

*Group and Individual Contributions:* You will work individually and in groups in this class. Because of the nature of the class and the importance of group discussion for the learning that will take place here, a significant portion of the final grade will be determined by your participation in class discussion and group collaboration. Involvement is a necessary, important, and *required* part of this course. Showing up is the first step to class participation. However, good involvement is not equal to quantity of participation. Rather, I am looking for quality of involvement (i.e., not only engaging fully in class discussion, but also listening effectively to/with others, participating in activities, asking helpful questions, integrating the reading into class discussions, providing examples of course content, etc.).

A baseline assumption for this class is that you attend. You do not receive any kind of grade for attending class. However, I will take role, and you will be penalized 0.5% of your total course grade for every class missed. You are allowed 2 absences without penalty. Please consider these days as “personal time off.” You can use these days when you are sick, out of town, overwhelmed with other schoolwork, or just want to go to the mountains. However, when you have used your personal time off, you have no more and each subsequent absence results in a deduction from your final grade. Therefore, if for example you miss 4 classes, you will receive a 1% deduction from your final grade. Also, please remember that attendance and participation are not the same thing.

*Study Guides/Preparation Assignments:* As stated in my teaching philosophy, the purpose of meeting together as a class is to have experiences and conversations that you cannot get on your own. Therefore, you must come prepared. To ensure that we are prepared to work together each day, you will be required to complete and turn in a study guide (definitions and discussion questions) or preparation assignment each class period. Study guides and preparation assignments **must be typed** and will be turned in at the end of each class. No late work will be accepted for credit.

I recognize that most classes do not require you to do this, but I don’t believe you or I want to spend the semester listening to lectures about what you have already (or should have already) read. Study guides and preparation assignments will allow us to clarify and apply what you learn from your reading. In addition, these study guides will allow you to prepare for your exams as you go along, rather than all at once. Therefore, this requirement does not ask you to do any additional work than what is expected in any course.

## Tentative Schedule – CMST 3250, Spring 2016

Week/Day	Topic	Readings/Assignments Due
<b><u>Week 1</u></b>		
Monday	Jan. 11	Introduction to the Course
Wednesday	Jan. 13	Learning, Leadership, & Organization Sanders, “Becoming a Learner”
<b><u>Week 2</u></b>		
Monday	Jan. 18	<b>No Class: MLK Holiday</b>
Wednesday	Jan. 20	Classical Approaches: Scientific Management & Human Relations Harris & Nelson (pp. 63-73) Taylor, “The Principles of Scientific Management”
<b><u>Week 3</u></b>		
Monday	Jan. 25	Human Resources Approaches Harris & Nelson (pp. 73-80)
Wednesday	Jan. 27	Case Study and Application Film: <i>Remember the Titans</i> (in class)
<b><u>Week 4</u></b>		
Monday	Feb. 1	Defining Organizational Communication Video: <i>Koschmann, “What is Organizational Communication?”</i> Ashcraft et al., “Constitutional Amendments”
Wednesday	Feb. 3	The Interpretive Turn and the Communicative Constitution of Organization Putnam, “The Interpretive Perspective” Allen, “Social Construction”
<b><u>Week 5</u></b>		
Monday	Feb. 8	Organizations as Systems Miller, “Systems Approaches”
Wednesday	Feb. 10	Cultural Approaches Keyton, “Communication and Organizational Culture”
<b><u>Week 6</u></b>		
Tuesday	Feb. 16	Taking a Cultural Approach <b>(Monday Class Schedule)</b> Martin, “Perspectives and Theories of Organizational Culture” Van Maanen, “The Smile Factory”
Wednesday	Feb. 17	Exam 1 Review
<b><u>Week 7</u></b>		
Monday	Feb. 22	<b>No Class: Professor at a Conference</b>
Wednesday	Feb. 24	<b>Exam 1</b>
<b><u>Week 8</u></b>		
Monday	Feb. 29	<b>No Class: Professor at a Conference</b>
Wednesday	Mar. 2	Critical Approaches Eisenberg, “Critical Approaches to Organizational Communication” Branch, “The Shame of College Sports”

## Tentative Schedule – CMST 3250, Spring 2016

### Week 9

Monday Mar. 7 **No Class: Spring Break**  
 Wednesday Mar. 9 **No Class: Spring Break**

### Week 10

Monday Mar. 14 Applications of Critical Theory Deetz, “Corporate Colonization”  
 Wednesday Mar. 16 Understanding Globalization Friedman, *The World Is Flat*

### Week 11

Monday Mar. 21 Applications of Globalization Film: *China Blue*  
 Wednesday Mar. 23 Decision-Making and Collaboration Lewis et al., “Collaborative Tensions”  
 Health, “Rethinking Community Collaboration”

### Week 12

Monday Mar. 28 Ethical Collaboration and Decision Making Ludwig & Longenecker, “The Bathsheba Syndrome”  
**Honesty Papers Due**  
 Wednesday Mar. 30 Organizational Ethics Kuhn & Ashcraft, “Corporate Scandal and the Theory of the Firm”  
 Lyon & Mirivel, “Reconstructing Merck’s Practical Theory of Communication”

### Week 13

Monday April 4 Power and Influence Collins, “Level 5 Leadership”  
 Wednesday April 6 Power and Influence Vera & Rodriguez, “Humility as a source of Competitive Advantage”

### Week 14

Monday April 11 Conflict Management Processes Fisher & Ury, “Interests, Not Positions”  
 Wednesday April 13 Exam 2 Review

### Week 15

Monday April 18 **Exam 2**  
 Wednesday April 20 Organizational Communication Analysis

### Week 16

Monday April 25 **No Class: Work on Organizational Communication Analysis**  
 Wednesday April 27 **No Class: Work on Organizational Communication Analysis**

### Final

Monday May 2 **Organizational Communication Analysis Due (Canvas, 11:30 am)**

Tentative Schedule – CMST 3250, Spring 2016