COM 623, Organizational Communication

Syllabus
Fall 2010

Professor: Tom Kelleher, Ph.D.

Contact Info.
956-9944
Crawford Hall 321
tkell@hawaii.edu

Meeting Times and Place
Wednesday, 2:30-5:00 p.m.
Kuykendall Hall 304

Office Hours
Monday, 10-noon
Tuesday, 1:30-3 p.m.
Thursday, 12:30-2 p.m.
By appointment.

Course Overview

Description
In COM 623, we will read, analyze, discuss and write about major concepts and processes of strategic organizational communication and public relations. COM 623 is a core course in the communication M.A. for students specializing in organizational/intercultural communication. The catalog description reads: Theories, concepts and applications of strategic communication and public relations to achieve organizational goals.

We will learn about the following:
- communication as a central process in organizations
- classical theories of organizational communication
- applied contemporary organizational theory
- public relations theory
- strategic organizational communications and public relations
- use of information technologies in organizational contexts

Objectives
Success in this course means you will:

1. write well about perspectives of organizational communication and public relations
2. orally discuss perspectives of organizational communication and public relations
3. analyze strategic communication processes
4. apply communication concepts to your own experience in organizations
5. apply organizational communication theory and public relations theory to your academic and professional interests (e.g., research project development)
6. offer informed critique of strategic communication practices
7. explore your scholarly and professional options in strategic communication

Expectations
Your final grade will be based on weekly writing, class participation, a midterm exam, a term paper and in-class presentations including a book review of a general org com or public relations textbook.

Final Grade Requirements
A = 90-100%
B = 80-89%
C = 70-79%
D = 60-69%
F = Below 60%

Grading Weight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly writing</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book review</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper (written audit or review)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation (audit or review)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Weekly Writing (30%)**
*Primary Objectives: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6*

By midnight on most Tuesdays (see course timeline), you're required to e-mail me a written response (no more than 500 words) in which you discuss and react to the assigned reading material for that week. Here's what I'll look for in the response e-mail:

- **Grammar and style.** Poorly constructed sentences can be an obstacle to meeting all the criteria that follow.
- **Clarity.** These short writing assignments can be written in a conversational tone, but clarity is key. Clear writing reflects clear thinking.
- **Evidence that you've read the material carefully.** I don't expect you to respond to each and every point made in each assigned reading, but an e-mail that lacks any meaningful reference to at least some of the more subtle details of the assigned readings will make me wonder.
- **Application.** Are you able to apply the concepts you've learned to real-world events, including your own experiences?
- **Evidence that you've thought critically about the material.** While it should be clear from reading your e-mail that you're familiar with the material as it was presented, don't forget the "response" part. This is where your informed opinion counts, and where you get to show off those critical thinking skills. Keep in mind that critical thinking doesn't necessarily mean negative thinking.

**Participation and Attendance (10%)**
*Primary Objectives: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6*

The participation portion of your grade will reflect your contributions as an individual and as a member of the class as a whole. Your participation in class discussions should reflect your reading and preparation. Here are some examples. Of course, many combinations of factors are possible. These are only examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Grade</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>perfect attendance in class; regularly made resourceful and constructive comments in class discussions that reflected reading, preparation and a solid understanding of the material covered; always prepared to make connections between required readings and outside literature, research projects, etc.; recognized by peers as class leader in discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>good attendance, participated regularly in class, clearly kept up with reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>good attendance, getting a little behind on the reading at times made it hard for this student to get involved in discussions of more advanced concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>good attendance and participation, but didn't seem to take non-graded assignments and deadlines very seriously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>attendance issues, often seemed unprepared</td>
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**Book Review Assignment (10%)**
*Primary Objectives: 1, 2, 3*

In small groups, you will select a general organizational communication or public relations textbook to review. You will summarize the main points made in the book, evaluate the approach the authors take, and explain why you would or would not recommend the book to other students and faculty. The review will include a written report and an in-class presentation on September 29. Assignment details will be discussed in class near the beginning of the semester.

**Midterm Exam (20%)**
*Primary Objectives: 1, 3, 5*

This will be an open-book, open-note exam in class on October 27. Laptops are welcome. Basically, the exam will include a few open-ended questions or scenarios that will serve as prompts. Your job will be to respond to the prompts by choosing appropriate concepts and theories covered in class and applying those.

**Term Paper (30% = 20% written plus 10% oral)**

Choose one of two options: a communication audit or a topic-oriented theoretical review.

- **Communication Audit.** The communication audit option requires you to get (or already have) access to a real organization, to study first-hand its internal and external communications and to report your findings and recommendations in writing. The oral presentation part of the assignment should simulate a business presentation to organizational management highlighting your recommendations and reasoning behind those recommendations.
  *Primary Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7*

- **Theoretical Review.** The topic-oriented theoretical review should cover theories and research that can be used to better understand and practice organizational communication or public relations. This paper will require APA style. The paper should basically answer the following question: "What does theory and research tell us about [insert your interests here] and strategic organizational communication?" The oral part of this assignment is for you to teach a short lesson on your topic. The lesson need not be as theoretically detailed as the paper. *Primary Objectives: 1, 2, 5, 7*

**Seeking Help**

This course should provide a great learning experience for all of us. The success of the course depends largely on effective student-teacher interaction. Don't feel like you have to have a pressing problem to talk to me. I look forward to hearing your input. I'll be available during my office hours unless announced otherwise. Of course, I'm often in and available at times not posted as office hours. Generally, I'll leave my office door open if I'm available. If my door is closed, that either means I'm out or that I'm in but working on deadline or getting ready for class. In any case, we can set an appointment if that works better.
**Special Accommodations**

Students requiring special accommodations must notify me and present appropriate supporting documentation by the end of the second week of class.

**Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty of any sort will not be tolerated. I take plagiarism very seriously. Please see me if you have any questions about academic honesty, and I'll be happy to discuss such issues in advance of you submitting your work.

**Preliminary Class Timeline**

This should give you a general overview of what we'll cover. Additional readings, speakers and assignments may be added as we go.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Days</th>
<th>General Topics</th>
<th>Assignments and readings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 29</td>
<td>Textbook reviews</td>
<td>Textbook review assignments</td>
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Weekly writing. |
|---|---|---|
Weekly writing. |
| Oct 27 | Midterm | Midterm |
Weekly writing. |
Weekly writing. |
| Nov 17 | Work sessions for term-papers, peer discussion and editing | Project examples |
| Nov 24 | Work sessions for term-papers, peer discussion and editing | Rough draft due for peer editing |
| Dec 1 | Student presentations | |
| Dec 8 | Student presentations | Term paper due |