

ACS 203: Introduction to Organizational Communication

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Course Syllabus

Primary Text

Miller, K. (2015). *Organizational Communication: Approaches and Processes* (7th ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

Course Description and Rationale: This course is an undergraduate introduction to organizational communication. It provides a survey of theories, research-based knowledge, and practice in organizational communication. The overall goals of this course are to understand the ways in which communication is central to organizations and organizing—not just in terms of transmitting information but constituting the fundamentals of organizing itself.

Class Objectives: By the end of this course, you should be able:

1. To appreciate the central nature of communication within diverse organizational contexts (e.g., corporations, nonprofits, consultancies, government agencies)
2. To distinguish between different approaches to the study and practice of organizations, from classical to contemporary
3. To use a communicative lens to study key organizational and workplace issues (e.g., conflict, culture, globalization, technology, diversity), from the perspective of internal and external publics
4. To critique and apply organizational communication theory in contemporary cases, suggesting concrete recommendations to improve organizational practices and/or stakeholder relationships
5. To reflect your own communicative experiences in organizations.

Email Netiquette: As we move into an increasingly digital world, it is important that you practice appropriate etiquette with your email practices. Using email appropriately will help you be taken seriously both by professors and employers/colleagues. Note that emails are different (more formal) than text messages, so your email should include several components:

1. Make sure to use your SIUE email account. As you graduate, this rule will continue to apply. Always email academic/professional messages from your professional account rather than andyloveskitties@hotmail.com, no matter how important your love of kitties is to your personal identity. Oftentimes, emails from unofficial addresses are ignored, deleted, or marked as spam and never read.
2. Use the subject line effectively. For this class, identify yourself as a student in this course (Andy Bernard – ACS 203 section 001). I teach three courses per semester. This will help me to quickly see what your message is about. In the corporate world, clearly state the

grounds for your query (Confirming 2pm Meeting on Thursday June 4th – Andy Bernard, Dunder Mifflin).

3. Initiate the email with a respectful greeting. For this course, simply “Dr. Sellnow-Richmond,” is an appropriate greeting. “Hello Dr. Sellnow-Richmond,” or “Dear Dr. Sellnow-Richmond,” would also be appropriate. Note that in college, many of your professors will have earned a doctorate in their field of study. This often degree requires a decade or more in specialized study, and deserves respect. Mr. or Mrs. are not appropriate titles for your college instructors. At times, you will take classes from someone who has not earned this degree. If this is the case, or if you are unsure, Professor is a safe and appropriate option. In the corporate world, you should check to see if a website or business card includes the title of the individual you are emailing.
4. Be specific and clear in your email. First, ensure that the question you are asking was not covered in the syllabus. (You might be surprised to see how many answers professors include in these documents!) Make sure to use emails for cases that allow you to get to the point, omitting long stories or scenarios. If you find that you do require paragraphs to explain yourself, use the email to set up a time to discuss your circumstances with your professor in person. Emailing long, drawn-out explanations make it more likely that your message will be misunderstood by the receiver.
5. Avoid using shorthand texting abbreviations or slang in your email. Make sure to send proofread email with complete punctuation. Although you may be sending the email from your phone, it is likely to be read on a computer. Even if the receiver receives your message on their phone, they are reading it as an email, not a text message. Slang and text abbreviations have no place in professional email correspondence.
6. Close your email respectfully, and include your name. It may be appropriate to simply sign your first and last name as a closing. If you are asking for something (information or an assignment exception) in your email, you will want to include a respectful acknowledgment that of this (Thank you for your consideration,). Close with your personal details (Andy Bernard, ACS 203 section 001, Monday & Wednesday 3:00pm – 4:30pm). In your career, you will want to develop a signature line that includes your name, position, place of employment, and contact information.
7. Reread your email before sending. If you are emailing regarding a complaint you have, make sure your email does not come across as hostile or unhinged (avoid strings of all capital letters, as these make it appear as if you are yelling). Make sure to proofread for errors, and that you are comfortable having the message shared with others (remember it is very easy for email messages to be forwarded to administrators or others).
8. Once you have sent your message, wait at least 24 hours before expecting a response, or until the completion of the weekend. I will do my best to email you within 24 hours. Please give me this window before sending a polite follow-up messages to ensure that your message was received.

Assignments: This course is offered as an introduction to the diverse landscape of organizational communication. As we work through the internal and external components of organizational communication, you will complete assignments designed to help emphasize application of course concepts to the real world. The assignments are described below.

Observations: You will identify film or television program to “observe” in the context of course concepts over the course of the semester. You will conduct three observation reports on the organization in the program/film you have chosen, which will allow you to apply content from the course to external examples. Each observation will focus on a different aspect of organizational communication covered in the course. Observation prompts will be provided to help you narrow your focus for each of these. You are welcome to choose your own film or television program. Some suggestions you might consider include:

- The Office
- Parks and Recreation
- Superstore
- Office Space
- The Social Network

Organizational Culture Paper: We will spend part of this course examining organizational culture. To understand this further, you will engage in an activity that will introduce you to three orientations of organizational culture. In approximately 5-6 pages (APA) you will respond to guided prompts in which you will reflect on each of these perspectives in the context of three different research articles.

Organizational Leadership Case Study: We will cover organizational leadership in detail, particularly through times of organizational change. Once you understand this material, I will provide several leadership case studies for you to consider. You will provide informed suggestions for the leadership in the case study you’ve chosen. You will 1.) draft a memo to your internal stakeholders explaining your organizational leadership’s decision to move forward as you’ve determined is best, and 2.) provide a written explanation (to me) as to why you chose this route.

Observation Paper: Once you have completed all four site observations, you will be able to see how all of the components of organizational communication we cover in the course apply to a real world organization. At the end of the semester, you will draw on your observations to illustrate how organizations exist, succeed, and struggle through (in)effective communication. In a 3-4 page paper, you will respond to prompts provided to demonstrate the principles of organizational communication we have covered, including each of your four site observations as supporting material.

Final Exam: There will be a cumulative final exam for this course. Any reading or lecture material may appear on the exam. More details, as well as a study guide, will be provided nearer the end of the course for your preparation.

Points Distribution:

Assignment	Points	Percent of Grade
Observations (3)	150 pts. (50 each)	20%
Culture Paper	50 pts.	10%
Case Study	50 pts.	10%

Observation Paper	150 pts.	20%
Final Exam	100 pts.	20%
TOTAL	500 pts.	

Grades are determined on a straight percentage scale based on the number of points earned out of a maximum of 500 points. **There will be no further rounding of final grades.** Final grades are calculated as follows:

A =	90%-100%	(450-500)
B =	80%-89.9%	(400-449)
C =	70%-79.9%	(350-399)
D =	60-69.9%	(300-349)
F =	below 59.9%	(299 and below)

Academic Integrity: University standards regulating academic integrity (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, etc.) are strictly enforced. Infractions may result in a zero for the assignment or a failing grade in the course.

Plagiarism is a serious offense in this course. Putting your name on a piece of work in which any part is not yours, is *plagiarism* – unless the borrowed thought or wording is clearly marked and the work is fully identified. Taking words, phrasing, or sentence structure, or any other element of another person’s ideas, and using them as if they were your own is stealing. Simply paraphrasing the work of another without acknowledging the information source is also plagiarism. Merely restating another individual’s ideas in different words does not make the ideas yours either. Please note that serious infractions of these rules will result in a failing grade in the course.

Keep in mind that using the words and ideas of others for your speeches is borrowing something from those individuals. It is *always* necessary to identify the original source of supporting information for your speeches. You must cite the source of any material, quoted OR paraphrased, used in your essays and in your presentations. Proper documentation requires a bibliography of any outside texts you have consulted including both traditional sources and online sources. Be careful to document sources within your papers and bibliography as well as orally during your presentations. The absence of this documentation constitutes *plagiarism* – a serious academic and professional offense. For more information on SIUE’s plagiarism policy, visit <http://www.siue.edu/policies/li6.shtml>.

Written Work must be typed and uploaded to BlackBoard unless otherwise indicated by your professor.

Extra Credit: We feel it is important to your education that you experience the kinds of events and research that are critical to our University’s mission. Thus, you will be given extra credit for participating in various departmental activities and research projects. However, it is possible that no projects will be available during the semester. Do not count on extra credit. *If* these opportunities become available, they will be announced in class.

Evaluations: Near the end of this course you will be asked to complete an anonymous departmental course evaluation inviting your opinions about the course and my teaching. Your honest and constructive feedback is valued by the Department of Applied Communication Studies and me. The course evaluation questionnaire will be administered to ensure your confidentiality. All responses will be carefully reviewed; though will be unavailable to me until after final grades have been submitted.

Final Grades: Final grades will be input into CougarNet once all assignments and grades are posted in BlackBoard. You can calculate your final percentage prior to the publication of your final grades. If you are within, for example, .3% or the next letter grade, please to not email me to ask that I bump you. I will not respond to your email. I will account for any extra credit after the standard grades are input, and I will post the grade you earned in CougarNet. Email inquiries will not positively impact these.

These are the ways I view particular grades:

- When I assign a “**D**,” I intend to communicate that the minimum standards for the assignment have been met, and also that *significant deficiencies exist*.
- When I assign a “**C**,” I intend to communicate that the *basic expectations of the assignment have been met*; this is not a “bad” grade, nor a “punitive” grade, and it is one that I frequently assign. It’s a grade that, theoretically, most work should receive. You have simply done what I have asked of you on any given assignment.
- When I assign a “**B**,” I intend to communicate that the *quality of work is distinctly above that which the assignment required*. A grade of “B” does not indicate a deficiency—it means “above average,” that is, “more than sufficient, even for a major in the discipline.” You have done a bit *more than asked* on any given assignment.
- I assign an “**A**” to work that I *consider innovative, creative, intellectually rigorous, and demanding*. “A” work typically integrates your reading and almost always *goes well beyond (but still includes) the basic requirements of the assignment*.

ACCESS: Students needing accommodations because of medical diagnosis or major life impairment will need to register with Accessible Campus Community & Equitable Student Support (ACCESS) and complete an intake process before accommodations will be given. Students who believe they have a diagnosis but do not have documentation should contact ACCESS for assistance and/or appropriate referral. The ACCESS office is located in the Student Success Center, Room 1270. You can also reach the office by e-mail at myaccess@siue.edu or by calling 618.650.3726. For more information on policies, procedures, or necessary forms, please visit the ACCESS website at www.siue.edu/access.

Tips for Success in this Course:

1. Read all of the information provided.
2. Watch/listen to any videos posted.
3. Enter the online classroom every day.
4. Check your university email account daily.
5. Print a copy of the course syllabus and calendar and keep it on hand.
6. Ask questions when you are unsure of class expectations.
7. Proofread all of your work.

8. Follow all assignment/deadline requirements.

Subject to Change Notice: All material, assignments, and deadlines are subject to change with prior notice. It is your responsibility to stay in touch with your instructor, review the course site regularly, or communicate with other students, to adjust as needed if assignments or due dates change.

Course Calendar

Due Date	Topics	Assignments Due
12/25	Introduction to Organizational Communication Classical Approaches Human Relations & Human Resources Approaches Systems and Cultural Approaches Constitutive Approaches Critical and Feminist Approaches	Miller Ch. 1 Miller Ch. 2 Miller Ch. 3 Miller Ch. 4 Miller Ch. 5 Miller Ch. 6 Observation 1 Culture Paper
1/1	Socialization Processes Decision-Making and Conflict Management Organizational Change and Leadership Organizational Leadership and Followership	Miller Ch. 7 Miller Ch. 8 Miller Ch. 9 Miller Ch. 10 Case Study Observation 2
1/8	Emotion and Change Synthesizing Principles of Org Com	Miller Ch. 11 Miller Ch. 12 Miller Ch. 13 Miller Ch. 14 Observation 3 Observation Paper Final Exam