

## COMM401 Organizational Communication

9:00 - 9:50 M/W/F (Fall 2018)  
Columbia Hall 1370

**Instructor:** Dr. Xun Zhu (Joe)

**Office Hours:** W 10:00-12:00, or by appointment

**Office:** Columbia Hall 2370K

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*A note about email:* I will do my best to respond to emails in short order during working hours (9am-5pm, Monday through Friday).

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**Course Description** Organizations are pervasive and influential in our lives. From the social groups we hang out with to the places we work, organizations shape the way we relate to and interact with each other. This course is devoted to helping class members develop a full understanding of communication within and from organizations of various kinds. We will focus on social scientific approaches, theories and research concerning how people organize, socialize, make decisions, negotiate, develop leadership, and manage conflicts and emotions, among other topics. Special attention will be given to the messages and symbolic interactions of individuals or groups embedded within organizations, as well as the communication behavior between and across organizations. Throughout lectures, discussion, and assignments, the course also prepares the class members with skills useful for achieving individual and collective goals in contemporary organizational settings.

### Course Objectives

By the end of the semester each student should:

- *Distinguish* the major school of thoughts in the study of organizational communication
- *Recognize* major conceptions of communication in organizational research
- *Understand* and *describe* major theories concerning socialization, decision making, conflict management, and emotions in organizational settings
- *Discuss* principle perspectives on leadership in organizations
- *Appreciate* the ways in which technology, and social media in particular, shapes organizational processes
- *Apply* course concepts to real-life issues in organizational settings
- *Engage in* intellectual conversation, *defend* a position, and *articulate* arguments

For me, I expect to learn more about organizational communication through my interaction with class members.

### Course Materials

1. Required:
  - Miller, K. (2015). *Organizational communication: Approaches and processes* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
  - Additional readings or materials posted on Blackboard
2. Recommended:

- Keyton, J. & Shockley-Zalabak, P. (2010). *Case studies for organizational communication: Understanding communication processes*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Lave, C.A. & March, J.G. (1975). *An introduction to models in the social sciences*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

**Course Assessment**

<b>Grade Composition</b>			
<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>%</b>
In-class participation	each class (5 pts each)	125	12.5%
Digital participation	each week (5 pts per week)	75	7.5%
Written assignments	4 assignments (100 pts each)	400	40%
Assignment presentation	4 assignments (25 pts each)	100	10%
Exams	2 exams (150 pts each)	300	30%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1000</b>	<b>100%</b>

Final grades will be computed based on the following point totals:

- A = 900-1000 pts
- B = 800-899 pts
- C = 700-799 pts
- D = 600-699 pts
- F = 599 pts or below

*Note:* I do not round grades up on either individual assignments or final grades. This decision is precisely due to the difficulties of drawing a line (e.g., Why is it legitimate to round up 89.9% to 90% but not bump 89.8% to 90%?).

**Course Assignments** The following description presents a brief introduction to participation, assignments, presentations, and exams required for this course. The specific description for each of them will be detailed in class.

**In-class participation.** Participation is essential to complete the course objectives. This class will be conducted from a lecture/discussion format. I do not see class as a simple repetition of what has been presented in your reading materials. Rather, I see class as an opportunity to collectively develop a deeper understanding of theories on organizational communication and their relevance to real-life issues. To make productive use of this time, you are expected to read *all the work required* before each class, and join the class to offer your thought and ideas. You

may earn up to 5 points per class through your *reading-based, enthusiastic, and thoughtful* contribution to discussion. It is important to note that being present (and awake) is not enough to earn participation points.

**Digital participation.** You will participate digitally throughout the semester. Each week you will need to post at least one article link that is relevant to the concepts covered in the readings of that week. In addition, you will need to read at least one article posted by other class members, and write a brief paragraph of your thoughts, reflections, or critique. You are expected to post the article link on Blackboard no later than 5 pm each Friday, and you need to post your comments on the article of your choice no later than 9am the following Monday. Late posts of either article or comments will result in a loss of digital participation points of the week.

**Written and presented assignments.** Throughout the semester, you will complete four assignments that are designed to help you apply the theories and research covered in class to real-world problems. The specific requirements for each assignment will be provided in separate handouts later. But in general, you are expected to submit a brief report that accurately describes one or two theories, articulates your analysis, and offers theory-guided critique and recommendations. You will also present your ideas in class before submitting your written report. The first and second assignments will be individual-based, while you will need to collaborate with another class member on the third and fourth assignments.

**Non-cumulative exams.** Two exam will cover materials in the assigned readings, class lectures, discussions, activities, and peer presentations. Before each exam, there will be a review session where I will help you familiarize the types of questions to be asked in the exam.

### Course Policies

**Attendance.** Attendance is important! I have observed that students who perform competently always have good attendance records. Therefore, I encourage you, in your own best interest, to not miss class. Each absence will result in a 5-point loss in your participation grade. Excused absences may be granted under unavoidable or legitimate circumstances, which must be properly documented. If a course section conflicts with a religious observance, please notify me of your schedule during the first two weeks of the semester. I may allow for makeup exams if you have a legitimate and verifiable excuse at my discretion (e.g., a family or medical emergency with proper documents, and a university-sanctioned event), AND if you contact me for approval *prior* to the exam.

**Scholarly integrity.** All students are subject to the University of North Dakota Code of Student Life, including, but not limited to, issues of academic dishonesty. For more information, see <https://und.edu/student-life/student-rights-responsibilities/>

**Deadlines.** All assignments are due *before class begins* on the date they are assigned. Assignments will NOT be accepted via email. Late assignments will receive a zero.

**Office hours.** I encourage you to take full advantage of office hours. You are welcome to make appointment for another time if you cannot make the listed hours. *You do not need a crisis to use office hours.* Instead, you can use them to ask questions about course materials specifically, or social influence and communication in general, to get additional reading materials, and to ask for clarification on the assignments.

**Tardiness.** Being class on time is required. By being punctual, you show respect to your peers and the instructor. Lateness will result in a loss of 50% of in-class participation points of the class meeting. Students arriving more than ten minutes late are counted absent. I understand that in the case of emergency, being late is uncontrollable or unavoidable. However, examples

such as “I overslept” or “My four-legged friend did something to make me late” are not emergencies.

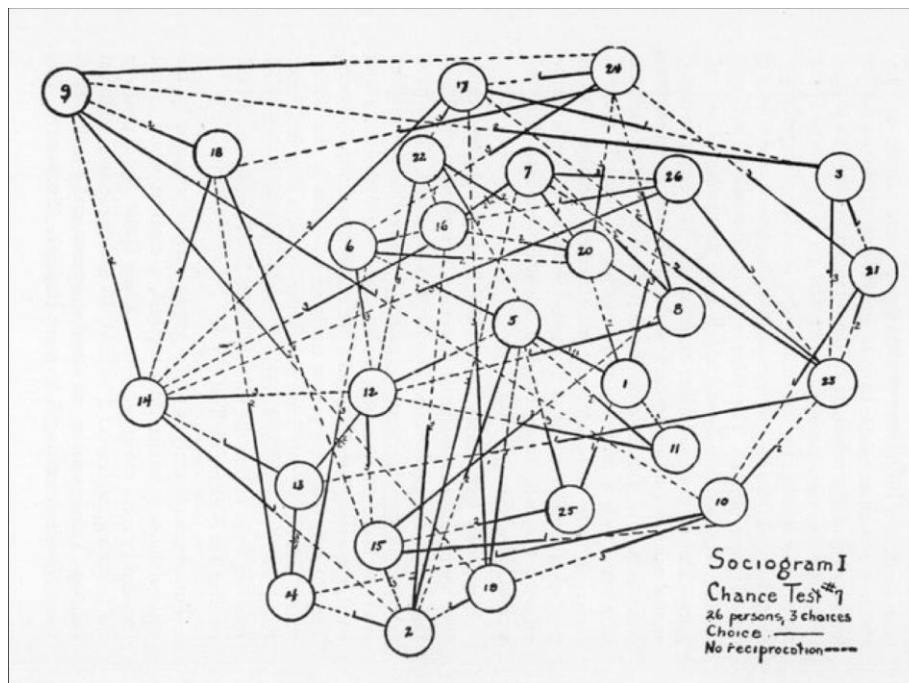
**Classroom Citizenship.** You are expected to be polite and respectful in your responses to others’ ideas, even if you may disagree. One way to sharpen your communication skills and have your voice heard is to provide constructive feedback on your classmates’ ideas and presentations in class.

**Technologies.** Cell phones should be turned off or ring tones turned to vibrate, and should be put away during class time. Although I do not prohibit using laptop computers in the classroom, research indicates that *taking notes with a paper notebook and pen or pencil will help you learn better!* Therefore, I do recommend you to adopt an “old school” style. If you want to read about scientific evidence on the benefits of handwritten notes, the following link provides some more information:

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>

**Extra credit.** Students may obtain up to 10 points (1%) extra credit from research participation. If research opportunities are made available, the student may receive 10 points for each one-half hour of out-of-class participation. Because the availability of this type of extra credit is contingent upon ongoing research projects that may employ students as research participants, I cannot guarantee that extra credit will be made available.

**Teaching style.** While I make every effort to accommodate all different learning styles in class, I tend to have a Facilitator teaching style, which takes a “student-centered learning” approach. Students who are “independent, active, collaborative learners thrive in this environment.” If you are interested in gaining a better understanding of yourself as a learner, please refer to the Learning Style Inventory at <https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Documents/IDEAS%202014%20Handouts/LearningStyleInventory.pdf>



Who shall survive? J. L. Moreno

**Course Calendar**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
8/19		Course introduction & Syllabus	Review survey & Intro to Org Comm
8/26	Classic approach	Human relation approach	Workshop I: How to make a poster?
9/2	Labor Day: no class meeting	HW1 poster presentation	System and cultural approach
9/9	Socialization	Cybervetting	Workshop II: A primer on the 140-character resume
9/16	RTD18: no class meeting	Rumors & Gossips	Decision-making I
9/23	Decision-making II	Workshop III: Orange case	HW2 poster presentation
9/30	Communication competency	Exam 1 review and Prep	Exam 1
10/7	Conflict management I	Conflict management II	Workshop IV: How to work with Jerks?
10/14	Leadership I	Leadership II	Workshop V: How to conduct an interview?
10/21	Field work: Interviewing leaders	HW3 presentation I	HW3 Presentation II
10/28	Emotion and compassion in workplace	Workshop VI: A primer on emotional intelligence	Technology I
11/4	Technology II	Workshop VII: Tech and Org Com	Field work day: comparing social media
11/11	Veterans Day: no class meeting	HW4 presentation I	HW4 presentation II
11/18	Social capital	Workshop VIII: A primer on network analysis	Thanksgiving: no class meeting
11/25	Clandestine organizations	Dealers' choice	Exam 2 review and prep
12/2	Exam 2	Summary/Feedback	
12/9	Final Week		

**Important dates:**

<b>9/5</b>	HW1 presentation	<b>10/24 &amp; 10/26</b>	HW3 presentation
<b>9/7</b>	HW1 paper	<b>10/29</b>	HW3 paper
<b>9/28</b>	HW2 presentation	<b>11/14 &amp; 11/16</b>	HW4 presentation
<b>10/1</b>	HW2 paper	<b>11/19</b>	HW4 paper
<b>10/5</b>	Exam 1	<b>12/3</b>	Exam 2