

Critical Communication Skills in Organizations

Fall 2016 (3 Credits)

Dr. Melissa Maier

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T/R 12:35 – 1:50 p.m.

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Course Description

Organizations, places or groups in which we come together to get things done, are a critical part of each of our lives. We work in organizations, many of us play in organizations, and we count on organizations for our health care, schooling, shopping, and other needs. In this course, we will examine skills people use to communicate more effectively in organizational contexts. More specifically, the goals of this course are:

- To investigate the challenges to communicating effectively in organizations
- To understand the challenges to and benefits of the superior/subordinate relationship
- To explore conflict management strategies for organizations
- To learn and practice skills necessary for effective collaboration and team management
- To analyze organizational communication scenarios based on communicative effectiveness and recommend suggestions based on theory and research.
- To create communication plans for effective communication in organizations

Required Text

Course readings are available on D2L.

Course Evaluation

Case Studies (2 @ 50 pts)	100 points
Feedback Application	25 points
Meeting Application	75 points
Final Project	100 points
Attendance & Participation	100 points
Total:	400 points

Letter grades will be based on the following scale:

A = 94-100%	A- = 90-93.9%	
B+ = 87-89.9%	B = 84-86.9%	B- = 80-83.9%
C+ = 77-79.9%	C = 74-76.9%	C- = 70-73.9%
D+ = 67-69.9%	D = 60-66.9%	
	F = 59.9% or below	

Assignments & Graded Work

Case studies: You will be asked to review two case studies throughout the semester to analyze the communication challenges within the case and make recommendations for how the organization and/or individuals should proceed.

Applications: Application assignments are designed to provide an opportunity to practice specific organizational communication skills.

Final Project: Your final project in this course will require you to work in groups. Your group will choose an organizational challenge and develop a proposal that meets the needs of a specific organization.

Attendance & Participation: See *Course Policies*.

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation: Given that all of us have experience in organizational communication, your contribution to this class is invaluable. Our understanding of communication in organizations can be enhanced by multiple perspectives, and therefore I will be looking to you to contribute to our discussion. Additionally, I encourage you to bring in any materials you find outside of class to our discussions that relate to the course content, including videos, advertisements, products, news clippings or articles, etc.).

Attendance and participation counts for 25% of your grade. I assume you will all come to class and be prepared to discuss the material in a meaningful way. There are many things you can do to earn participation points. Here are a few examples:

- Being engaged in in-class activities
- Reading quizzes
- Asking questions
- Answering questions
- Making comments that incorporate course materials and sharing relevant experiences
- Being respectful and professional toward your instructor and your classmates

There are also many things you can do to lose points. Here are a few examples:

- Not participating
- Not listening
- Being engaged in technology or other work not relevant to the course
- Interrupting the instructor or classmates
- Being disrespectful or unprofessional toward the instructor or classmates
- Not regularly attending class

Attendance will be taken during each face-to-face meeting. There is no point deduction for missing a class; however, the work you will complete each week on your own will be directly related to the content covered during the face-to-face lecture so attending class will increase the likelihood of earning full points on your assignments. In addition, **STUDENTS WHO ATTEND ALL FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS WILL EARN 10 POINTS OF EXTRA CREDIT** at the end of the semester. Students who miss one face-to-face class can still earn 5 extra credit points. Students who miss more than one class period are not eligible for this extra credit opportunity, regardless of the reason for missing class. In other words, you do not need to provide an excuse for missing a class; you can miss one class for any reason and do not need to check in with me about it. However, if you need to miss a second, third, fourth, etc. class, for any reason, you simply will not be eligible for the extra credit. Finally, attending class means you do not arrive late or leave early.

Grading: Grade inflation has led many students to expect that showing up and turning in every assignment guarantees them an “A” in the course. To avoid any later confusion, I’d like to clarify my grading philosophy:

- **A:** Exemplary, nearly flawless work, greatly exceeds expectations.
- **B:** Above average, consistently high achievement, exceeds expectations.
- **C:** Average, satisfactory performance. Meets minimum expectations.
- **D:** Below average, unsatisfactory, fails to meet minimum expectations of course.
- **F:** Insufficient quality for college-level work. Does not meet expectations.

Grade reassessment: If you disagree with a grade you are assigned, you have the right to request a grade reassessment. I will not answer questions about grades before, during, or immediately after class. Any grade inquiry must be made through a written grade reassessment request. Please be aware that a reassessment of your work means it will be regarded. Reassessments may result in a grade change, and reassessment grades may be lower or higher than the original grade. Once reassessed, the new grade will be entered in the grade book, cancelling out the original grade. If you would like to request a grade reassessment, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Grade reassessment requests can be submitted beginning 24 hours after grades have been posted.
2. To request a grade reassessment, you must provide a 1-2 page, typed justification for the reassessment, and must indicate how the work met the requirements of the assignment.

- Grade reassessment requests must be received within one week of grades being posted and should be submitted via email.

Written work: Turning in well-prepared, carefully proofread, and on-time written work says a great deal about yourself and your level of respect for me. Below are the specific guidelines for written documents in this course:

- Written assignments should be prepared using word processing software (e.g., Word, Pages). Written work should follow *APA* 6th edition style manual guidelines. Work should be carefully proofread for errors.
- All assignments should include a title centered on the top of the page and your name in the top right corner of the page.
- Written work should be submitted through the “Dropbox” tab on D2L. I will NOT accept homework via email or in hard copy. Homework submitted via email or hard copy and not to D2L will be subject to late penalties, outlined below.
- All uploaded assignments must use the following format for filenames: LastNameAssignment (e.g., MaierHomework1). When I download and grade your assignments, this aids in ensuring the correct document is being uploaded for each student. Thank you in advance.
- All written assignments are due 30 minutes before class time (12:05 p.m.) on the due date indicated on the syllabus, or as otherwise posted on D2L. Assignments become late when they are turned in after the due time on their due date. A late assignment will receive an initial 10% penalty, and an additional 10% deduction for each weekday that it is late. You are provided ample time to complete each assignment. Please plan accordingly and use your time wisely, as extensions will not be granted. Technology problems, athletic schedules and the like will not excuse you from adhering to the deadlines.

Office hours: I am available to meet with you during my office hours (noted on page 1) and always by appointment. Please feel free to drop in during my office hours or email me for an appointment if you are unable to see me during the allotted time. In addition to meeting in my office, I am fairly accessible via email. Should you have a question about something covered in class, an assignment, or about life in general, send me an email and I will try to respond to you within a reasonable time. Questions regarding specific assignments sent within 24 hours of the assignment deadline will not receive a response. Be aware of this and plan accordingly. Additionally, I have other obligations immediately after our class. Because I need time to transition, I will not answer questions after class. If you have questions after class, plan to stop by my office during office hours.

Email policy: Teaching is very important to me. So is this course; however, this course is not my only responsibility during the semester. I teach other courses during the semester, as well as conduct research and perform service as part of my job responsibilities, in addition to my personal responsibilities. Email consumes a great deal of my time.

Considering this, I ask that you consider carefully before emailing me, and please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Emails should be reserved for setting up appointments with me.
- Emails should not ask general questions about assignments, deadlines, etc. All policies, assignment guidelines and rubrics are posted to D2L, or on the course syllabus. If you cannot find the answer to your questions in those places first, ask a classmate.
- Emails should not ask grade questions. Please see the grade reassessment policy above. I will not discuss grades over email.
- I will respond to emails within 2 business days, during regular business hours. I can typically respond to emails fairly quickly; however, there are times when I am unable to do so. I will do my best to respond as quickly as I am able, but please allow 2 business days for a response before sending a follow-up email.
- Emails should be professional and respectful. Emails should be written in full sentences with appropriate greetings (my official title is Dr. Maier) and salutations. Please include the course number in the subject line.

Equal treatment: The principle of equal treatment of all students is a fundamental guide in responding to requests for special consideration. No student will be given an opportunity to improve a grade that is not made available to all members of the class. This policy applies to requests for special treatment both before and after the course is completed. Examples of unacceptable opportunities for an individual include “extra credit” work, redoing an assignment, retaking an exam, taking an extra exam, or an extension of time on an assignment or exam. This policy is not intended to exclude reasonable accommodation of verified student disability or circumstances beyond a student’s control.

Class behavior: I have a strong commitment to the development and maintenance of an instructional climate that supports equality of opportunity and respect for differences based on sex, culture, race, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation. Your enrollment in this class assumes that you will treat your fellow students with respect. I also expect that

you will treat me with respect. Your behavior in our classroom is based on a single assumption—all members of the class are adults. You will therefore be expected to comport yourself as an adult. While a number of controversial topics may be discussed in class, and your active engagement in class discussions is desired, your engagement in class should give the utmost importance to showing respect for those around you. Instances of intolerant, disrespectful, or belligerent behavior will not be tolerated. If you are being deliberately intolerant, disrespectful, or hostile you will be required to leave the room. Patterns of unacceptable behavior may result in a failing grade in the class.

Technology and Cell Phones: As a member of the learning community, each student has a responsibility to other students who are members of the community. When cell phones or pagers ring and students respond in class or leave class to respond, it disrupts the class. Therefore, the Office of the Provost prohibits the use by students of cell phones, pagers, PDAs, or similar communication devices during scheduled classes. All such devices must be turned off or put in a silent (vibrate) mode and ordinarily should not be taken out during class. Given the fact that these same communication devices are an integral part of the University's emergency notification system, an exception to this policy would occur when numerous devices activate simultaneously. When this occurs, students may consult their devices to determine if a university emergency exists. If that is not the case, the devices should be immediately returned to silent mode and put away. Other exceptions to this policy may be granted at the discretion of the instructor. Additionally, laptops used in class should be used for note-taking purposes only. Violating this policy will result in a grade deduction.

Academic Dishonesty: Missouri State University is a community of scholars committed to developing educated persons who accept the responsibility to practice personal and academic integrity. You are responsible for knowing and following the university's student honor code, [Student Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures](#) and also available at the Reserves Desk in Meyer Library. Any student participating in any form of academic dishonesty will be subject to sanctions as described in this policy.

Statement of Nondiscrimination: Missouri State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution, and maintains a grievance procedure available to any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against. At all times, it is your right to address inquiries or concerns about possible discrimination to the Office for Institutional Equity and Compliance, Park Central Office Building, 117 Park Central Square, Suite 111, (417) 836-4252. Other types of concerns (i.e., concerns of an academic nature) should be discussed directly with your instructor and can also be brought to the attention of your instructor's Department Head. Please visit the OED website at www.missouristate.edu/equity/.

Disability Accommodation: To request academic accommodations for a disability, contact the Director of the Disability Resource Center, Plaster Student Union, Suite 405, (417) 836-4192 or (417) 836-6792 (TTY), www.missouristate.edu/disability. Students are required to provide documentation of disability to the Disability Resource Center prior to receiving accommodations. The Disability Resource Center refers some types of accommodation requests to the Learning Diagnostic Clinic, which also provides diagnostic testing for learning and psychological disabilities. For information about testing, contact the Director of the Learning Diagnostic Clinic, (417) 836-4787, <http://psychology.missouristate.edu/ldc>.

Religious Accommodation: The University may provide a reasonable accommodation based on a person's sincerely held religious belief. In making this determination, the University reviews a variety of factors, including whether the accommodation would create an undue hardship. The accommodation request imposes responsibilities and obligations on both the individual requesting the accommodation and the University. Students who expect to miss classes, examinations, or other assignments as a consequence of their sincerely held religious belief shall be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete such academic responsibilities. It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious observances on which they will be absent by submitting a Request for Religious Accommodation Form to the instructor by the end of the third week of a full semester course or the end of the second week of a half semester course.

Dropping a class: It is your responsibility to understand the University's procedure for dropping a class. If you stop attending this class but do not follow proper procedure for dropping the class, you will receive a failing grade and will also be financially obligated to pay for the class. For information about dropping a class or withdrawing from the university, contact the Office of the Registrar at 836-5520.

Emergency Response Statement: At the first class meeting, students should become familiar with a basic emergency response plan through a dialogue with the instructor that includes a review and awareness of exits specific to the classroom and the location of evacuation centers for the building. All instructors are provided this information specific

to their classroom and/or lab assignments in an e-mail prior to the beginning of the fall semester from the Office of the Provost and Safety and Transportation. Students with disabilities impacting mobility should discuss the approved accommodations for emergency situations and additional options when applicable with the instructor. For more information go to <http://www.missouristate.edu/safetran/51597.htm> and <http://www.missouristate.edu/safetran/erp.htm>.

Tentative Course Schedule

	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment due
1	Sept. 5/6 Sept. 7/8	Course Introduction Organizational Communication Challenges	All readings will be posted to D2L and marked by the date by which they should be read.	
2	Sept. 12/13 Sept. 14/15	Organizational Communication Challenges		
3	Sept. 19/20 Sept. 21/22	Superior/Subordinate Communication		
4	Sept. 26/27 Sept. 28/29	Superior/Subordinate Communication		
5	Oct. 3/4 Oct. 5/6	Organizational Conflict NO CLASS		
6	Oct. 10/11 Oct. 12/13	Organizational Conflict		Feedback Application
**October 10-13 is COMM Week. **				
7	Oct. 17/18 Oct. 19/20	Organizational Conflict	All readings will be posted to D2L and marked by the date by which they should be read.	
8	Oct. 24/25 Oct. 26/27	Facilitation		
9	Oct. 31/Nov. 1 Nov. 2/3	Facilitation		Case study 1
10	Nov. 7/8 Nov. 9/10	Facilitation NO CLASS		
11	Nov. 14/15 Nov. 16/17	Facilitation		Meeting Facilitations Meeting Facilitations
12	Nov. 21/22 Nov. 23/24	Strategic Planning NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break		
13	Nov. 28/29 Nov. 30/Dec. 1	Strategic Planning		
14	Dec. 5/6 Dec. 7/8	Strategic Planning		Case Study 2
15	Dec. 12/13 Dec. 14/15	Final Project Presentations Final Project Presentations		Final Project Presentations Final Project Presentations
16	Wed., Dec. 21	Final Exam, 12:30-2:30 p.m.		