

Introduction to Organizational Communication

COMN 2130

Spring Quarter 2021

Professor: Cris Tietsort, PhD

Class Times: Tu/Th 10:00am-11:50am

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Office Hours: Tues/Thurs, 4-5pm; Wed, 9-11am

WELCOME TO COMM 2130

I am *so* excited to have you in class. Beyond the course goals seen below, my hope is that this course draws you deeply into intellectual and personal thought regarding organizational life, including broader questions about what organizations are and what their purpose is, as well as how we navigate workplace relationships and the impact of communication. Ultimately, I hope this course provides more than mere head knowledge, but *actually impacts your life for the better*.

To achieve that purpose, this course will utilize readings, mini-lectures, discussions, and activities to help you engage with critical questions and challenges in organizations, understand key methods of inquiry and theoretical concepts, and apply these in a variety of contexts.

Here's what I hope you'll learn (Course Goals and objectives)

Ultimately, this course aims to equip you with knowledge and skills that allow you to think critically about organizational life, how it functions, and the instrumental role of communication in shaping organizational realities. In line with this overarching aim, the following goals are central to this course.

1. Understand and appreciate the multifaceted, complex nature of organizations in our current historical context
2. Articulate and critically evaluate your own values as they relate to organizational life, people management, and human communication practice
3. Understand and apply theoretical perspectives of organizing to modern organizational challenges
4. Analyze and evaluate organizational challenges through a communicative lens

Scientific Inquiry: Society and Culture Objectives

As part of the Common Curriculum, the courses designated as Scientific Inquiry: Society and Culture (SI- SC) seek to expose students to “Ways of Knowing” that involve scientific inquiry into aspects of human society and culture. Primarily those ways of knowing are embedded in the courses of the Social Sciences and involve the observation and analysis of human functioning and conduct.

Courses that meet the SI-SC designation promote achievement of the following learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the defining principles or perspectives that are central to inquiry within the disciplines in the social sciences.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the methods of inquiry specific to disciplines in the social sciences.

REQUIRED READING AND RESOURCES

There is no required textbook for this course. Primary and secondary reading sources will be posted to Canvas, along with podcasts, videos, and other resources for class preparation.

COVID Requirements

In line with University policy, we will continue to adhere to COVID recommendations based on our current Alert Level. Throughout most of this course, both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals will need to wear masks during class at all times. **Additionally, because our class has over 20 individuals, you will be required to sit in the same seat over the course of the Quarter.**

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions and concerns.

MUTUAL COMMITMENTS

My commitments to you

- *Passionate and Prepared Teaching* – Teaching and mentoring students is my greatest passion, and I believe the classroom is a sacred space for growth, learning, and relationship. You can *always* expect me to be prepared and passionate.
- *Committed to your Learning* – I do not see my role as teacher as simply giving out information; rather, we partner together to create a rich learning environment. I am committed to challenging you to think through difficult questions, take ownership of your learning, and grow as people.
- *Inclusive* – Education can only be successful when everyone is included. I commit to creating an open, dialogic space where all voices are invited and welcomed, and I have worked to create a course structure that represents our students and allows flexibility. I know I may miss the mark at times, and I sincerely invite your feedback or suggestions if there are other ways we can work together to make our time together more inclusive.
- *Authenticity and Availability* – Relationships are the bedrock of great learning, and I believe a critical part of great relationships is to be open and authentic with you all. This also means being available to you outside of class, through office hours, “Friday Hangouts,” coffee and meals together. Please don’t hesitate to ever reach out, either about the course or to talk about life, ideas, or any other topics of interest.
- *Accommodating and Flexible* – In my commitment to your individual learning, you can always expect me to accommodate when possible. If you cannot make my assigned office hours, let me know and I will make another time work. Additionally, I get that life happens. If something major is going on in your life, let me know so we can discuss if assignment dates need to be adjusted or other ways I can support you.
- *Prompt Feedback* – Timely feedback is essential for good student learning. As such, you can always expect me to get you feedback in a timely manner. Except for unforeseen circumstances, all feedback will be received within a week. If you need feedback more quickly, please talk to me ahead of time.

Commitments I Ask of You

- *Take ownership of learning* – Learning is not something done “to you,” but a collaborative and constructive process. Take ownership of your learning in this course and throughout your college experience. Great learning can only occur when *you* commit.
- *Offer your Perspective* – An essential part of this course is the collaborative nature of class discussion. Speak up and participate. Take risks and test big ideas. And offer your

experiences, as you *all* have unique experiences. I know people have varying comfort levels with this, so reach out if you're concerned about this and we can work together.

- *Engage in Inclusive and Respectful Dialogue* – If we are to encourage everyone to offer their perspective, this requires that we develop an open, inclusive, and respectful space for dialogue. Dialogue and debate are essential when wrestling with ideas, but we must also do so in a way that honors the *people* in the room. Criticize ideas, but not *people*.
- *Come prepared* – Great discussion can only happen when students are prepared, having done all readings and assignments thoroughly. In the same way I hope you hold me accountable to coming prepared to class, I ask you to consider the negative impact lack of preparation will have on your ability to learn well, in this class and beyond.

HOW WILL WE ASSESS OUR PROGRESS?

In any course, it is important for us to assess the quality of our learning as we go. All activities and assignments are meant to support your learning and to assess the quality and progress of your learning toward our course learning outcomes and the SI-SC common curriculum outcomes. The following is an outline of how we'll accomplish this.

2 Critical Reflection Papers

Organizations and people are incredibly complex. One critical element that guides much of our interaction and experience in the world is our own values. Within organizational life, our values and beliefs related to how organizations function, whom should be served, and how we should communicate with and treat others will all color our experience and communication.

So, you will be asked to write two critical reflection papers where you (1) reflect upon and articulate your values related to specific course concepts, and (2) critically evaluate those values *with theoretical perspectives from the course*. My hope is to invite you to come to greater awareness of your own values (which often go unnoticed), but also to have you consider if those values are grounded and serving you well given your ongoing understanding of the complexity of organizational life. Inevitably, I imagine some of your values may shift, or, at the very least, your understanding of how to *apply* those values may become more nuanced.

Three papers will be assigned with prompts that will guide your writing.

These papers should be roughly 1000 words. Typical APA formatting is double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font with 1" margins. Please practice quality formatting and grammar – grade may be reduced for poor writing.

Midterm Exam

A critical part of higher-order thinking is mastery and application of concepts and ideas. As such, exams are meant to assess your understanding of key concepts and give you opportunity to use these concepts to analyze more complex challenges and ideas.

Exams will draw from the course readings and material, as well as the discussions, lectures, and activities in class. Generally, exams consist of multiple choice, short-answer, and essay-based questions, all of which give you an opportunity to showcase your knowledge and apply course concepts.

Synthesis Activities Preparation

Throughout the semester, we will have 3 “Synthesis Activities,” such as case studies, topical debates, etc. Before each synthesis activity, you will complete a preparation document for submission and evaluation. This will help you prepare for thoughtful engagement with our in-class activity, as well as serve as formative assessment of your grasp of course material.

Organizational Theorizing Paper

Theories and concepts are only valuable if we can utilize them in understanding and improving our own engagement with organizations and organizational life. As such, the purpose of this paper is to give you space to analyze key organizational issues using theory and methods presented in the course.

Specifically, this paper asks you to offer your assessment of the key organizational challenge we discussed throughout the course – high levels of burnout, stress, and anxiety across the U.S. workforce, often called the great resignation. Using theory, concepts, and methods from this course, you will analyze this issue and offer your assessment of the root causes utilizing a communicative perspective. Then, based on your assessment, you will offer potential solutions that you believe effectively address (or start to address) these core issues and how we can organize for greater compassion.

Full details of this paper will be provided on Canvas and discussed in class.

Minute Thesis and In-Class Engagement

Research on learning and retention suggests that short, minute write-ups at the end of class are extremely helpful in locking in concepts and making connections to previous knowledge. Additionally, these provide me a space to seek on-going feedback on how class is going and assess if we are using our time effectively to support your learning.

In-class activities also serve as an important site of learning and development, where we apply critical course content to different cases and situations. When in-class activities occur, you may be asked to submit a short write up on what you learned that day.

These will be given in-class randomly throughout the semester and are graded for completion. At the end of the semester, your total will be divided by the number given for your grade.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Midterm Exam -----	300 pts
2 Critical Reflection Papers -----	160 pts.
Paper 1 – 70 points	
Paper 2 – 90 points	
Organizational Theorizing Paper -----	350 pts.
Synthesis Activity Prep -----	90 pts.
Minute Theses and Class Engagement -----	100 pts.
Total Points Possible:	1000 pts.

Grade Concerns and Discussion

This course utilizes the 24/7 rule in addressing student concerns over grades. When given a grade (for a paper, exam, etc) the student should wait 24 hours before contacting the professor. This 24-hour period gives time to process, calm down, and jot notes about *specifically* why they are concerned with their grade. Then, they may contact the professor to discuss grades. The 7 designates that no grades shall be discussed *after* 7 days from when the grade was assessed. As the semester progresses forward, it is simply too challenging to remember back beyond 7 days to accurately assess if grades should be adjusted. Instructor always retains the right to add or subtract points if they feel appropriate in the situation.

Assignment Due Dates

Whenever designated on the syllabus, assignments are to be turned in by *midnight* of the day assigned

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic(s)	Prep Resources	Assignments
Module 1 – Organizing in the 21st Century			
Tu 3/29	Introductions, Creating a Great Learning Environment; Course Intro		
Th 3/31	The Current Context of Organizations	Canvas	
Tu 4/5	What is an organization? Org Dynamics, Key Tensions, and the Fundamental Paradox	Canvas	
Module 2 – Historical Perspectives on Organizing			
Th 4/7	Classical/Managerial Approaches	Canvas	
Tu 4/12	Human Relations/Human Resources	Canvas	Critical Reflection
Th 4/14	Cultural Approaches	Canvas	
Tu 4/19	Synthesis Activity, Organizing Today	Canvas	Synthesis Prep
Module 3 – Theoretical Perspectives of Organizing			
Th 4/21	Constitutive Approaches: Sensemaking Theory	Canvas	
Tu 4/26	Constitutive: Structuration Theory	Canvas	
Th 4/28	Critical Approaches	Canvas	
Tu 5/3	Synthesis Activity	Canvas	Synthesis Prep
Th 5/5	Midterm Exam	Study Guide on Canvas	Midterm Exam
Module 4: Contexts for Organizing			
Tu 5/10	Leading and Managing People	Canvas	
Th 5/12	Voice, Silence, and Psychological Safety	Canvas	

Tu 5/17	Power and Politics	Canvas	
Th 5/19	Synthesis Activity	Canvas	Synthesis Prep
Tu 5/24	Emotions and Organizing	Canvas	
Th 5/26	Emotions and Organizing	Canvas	Critical Reflection
Tu 5/31	Crafting Compassionate, Human Organizations	Canvas	
Th 6/2	Final Paper Support; Buffer Day		
Finals	FINAL EXAM WEEK!		Final Paper Due

University Policies

Students with Disabilities

This course provides accommodation for all students with documented disabilities. If you would like to explore an accommodation, please reach out to the Disability Services Program (DSP) at their website: <http://www.du.edu/disability/dsp>

Academic Misconduct:

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism and may be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. *See also <http://www.du.edu/studentconduct> for general information about conduct expectations from the Office of Student Conduct.*

University Honor Code

All members of the University of Denver are expected to uphold the values of Integrity, Respect, and Responsibility. These values embody the standards of conduct for students, faculty, staff, and administrators as members of the University community. Visit [The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) for more information

Our institutional values are defined as:

Integrity: acting in an honest and ethical manner

Respect: honoring differences in people, ideas, and opinions
 Responsibility: accepting ownership for one's own conduct.

Religious Accommodation Policy

This course provides religious accommodation for all students. For full details, including request process, visit the [Religious and Spiritual Life web page](#).

Mental Health and Wellness

As part of the University's Culture of Care & Support we provide campus resources to create access for you to maintain your safety, health, and well-being. You can seek confidential mental health services available on campus in the [Health & Counseling Center \(HCC\)](#) and [My Student Support System \(My SSP\)](#). Another helpful campus office is [Student Outreach & Support \(SOS\)](#), where staff work with you to connect to all the appropriate campus resources (there are many!), develop a plan

of action, and guide you in navigating challenging situations. If you are concerned about yourself and/or one of your peers you can send a SOS referral.

TITLE IX

Gender violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, class, age, appearance, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The University of Denver is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex (gender), including sexual misconduct, sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking. [The Center for Advocacy, Prevention and Empowerment \(CAPE\)](#) provides programs and resources to help promote healthy relationships, teach non-violence and equality, and foster a respectful and safe environment for all members of the University of Denver community. All services are confidential and free of charge.

DU Writing Center

The Writing Center provides writing support for undergraduate and graduate students at all levels, on all kinds of projects, and at any stage of the process: from generating ideas to learning new editing strategies. Consultants take a collaborative approach, working with you to help you develop your writing in light of your specific goals and assignments. To make an appointment for a free, 45-minute consultation, call 303-871-7456 or go to MyWeb > Student > Writing Center. Visit our website (www.du.edu/writing/writingcenter/) for hours and additional information.

Student Athletes

If you are a student athlete, you should inform me of any class days to be missed due to DU sponsored varsity athletic events in which you are participating. Please provide me with an absence policy form by the end of the first week of class. You will need to make up any missed lectures, assignments, and/or exams.

FERPA and Privacy

The University of Denver is committed to the safeguarding and accurate maintenance of student records. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 provides students with a number of rights regarding their educational records. The University of Denver will not release student records without the written consent of the student. For more information, please see the Notification to Students of Educational Records and Student Information Rights and Policies or contact the Office of the Registrar at 303.871.4300 or registrar@du.edu.

COURSE POLICIES

Though I do not love the idea of policies, they are helpful to articulate what we know is most helpful in creating a rich, dynamic learning environment and the best overall learning experience. Policies here are meant to be clear and fair for all; please read these policies carefully so that you know the expectations I have.

Attendance

I believe it is important to treat you as the adults that you are, so I do not take attendance. That said, attendance is important not only in your own learning, but in contributing your perspective to the learning experience of others. Additionally, some in-class activities are graded, so missing those will impact your grade negatively.

Due to the ongoing threat of COVID 19, please do not attend class if...

1. You are feeling sick
2. You've been exposed to someone who may have COVID-19

In the above instances, please reach out to me so we can make sure you get course materials effectively.

Absences

Attendance is not required. However, if you know in advance you will miss class or have an emergency, please reach out to me. I can help you make sure you know the material expected of you, and we can arrange a make-up activity if the day you missed was an activity day.

Late Assignments

I take late assignments seriously, and I also know that life happens. As such, all assignments are due on the date listed on the syllabus unless there is a life or medical emergency (documentation typically required). Please let me know in advance if possible. Late work that is simply late will be assessed 15% off after the first day, and further reduced in half each day thereafter. No work will be accepted over 7 days from due date. *Additionally, I know that technical problems can occur, but please make efforts to submit early. If technical problems arise (i.e. cannot upload), please email copy and try to upload again next day.*