

SP 427 Communication in Organizations Fall 2005

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8-850am Clark C-251

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**Course Description:**

*"...I know that the spades are the swords of a soldier, I know that the clubs are weapons of war; I know that diamonds mean money for this art, but that's not the shape of my heart" (Sting, 1995).*

*"...why do we find it congenial to speak of organizations as structures but not clouds, systems but not songs, weak or strong but not tender or passionate?" (Gergen, 1991, p. 207)*

Too many times in popular culture and everyday life, we hear our working and organizing lives described in the metaphors of structure, money and war. Rarely do we hear them discussed as forms of art, shapes of our hearts, songs or clouds. What would happen if we explored this 'other side' of organizations and our working lives? What would happen if we reframed organizations and working life as art, shaped according to our hearts?

This course examines the relationship between and nature of organizing and communicating processes in a global context and how they impact on our ability to find, create and experience, 'good work'. This semester, we will reflect, analyze and imagine organizing processes and communicative practices to provide a better understanding of the working world, the nature of work and the quest for 'good work'. We will also explore contextual challenges to organizing and communicating 'good work' as well as specific components of the working world that can pose challenges to our performance, discovery and design of 'good work'. Finally, we will reflect on and imagine the future of organizing and communicative life as well as the future possibilities and practices that we hope will lead to our own forms of 'good work'.

**Course Objectives:**

Understanding how our communicative practices construct organizing processes and vice versa is central to this course and our experiences of good work. Specifically, the goals of this course are to

- ❑ Promote critical thinking about the nature of and relationship between communicating and organizing processes;
- ❑ Provide you with a range of theoretical concepts related to communicative and organizational life so you can analyze, understand and influence the nature of 'good work' as well as what it means to 'work' as organizations evolve;
- ❑ Build your awareness of current and future organizational and communicative dilemmas in a global context and
- ❑ Provide you with opportunities for concrete analysis of organizing and communicative practices, which you can use to enhance your experiences of organizational life and good work.

### **Required Text:**

Cheney, G., Christenson, L. T., Zorn, T. E. Jr., & Ganesh, S. (2004). *Organizational communication in an age of globalization: Issues, reflections and practices*. Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press Inc.

There may be additional material as the class progresses which will be distributed as necessary.

### **Course Prerequisites:**

If you know the basics of public speaking, group work, composition and research methods you will fare better in this course. If you do not possess these skills, you may experience challenges that other students may not. If you are in this position, please come and see us as early as possible in the semester so we can arrange some additional resources for you.

### **Teaching philosophy:**

*"I am not sure if I can tell the truth, I can only tell you what I know" (Clifford & Marcus, 1986).*

As teachers and scholars, our roles are not those of experts but one of guides, mentors and facilitators. Our duties in the classroom are several -- to reveal alternatives; embrace difference and dialogue; engage students and guide them where we can; figure out the tough stuff together, and finally, bring them to a place beyond where we can go with them and give them courage to go there. Journeys in class are therefore infused with three central commitments – **rigor, creativity and compassion**. To this end, we operate a 'fully informed' pedagogy. Students have assignments and evaluation criteria in advance, as well as access to us as draft readers, learning resource, study skills developers, confidantes, mentors and guides. All work is work in process and progress; however, we believe that very student is capable of producing excellent work if they remain committed to rigor, creativity and compassion.

### **Student responsibilities:**

As traveling companions on this semester's journey, you have several responsibilities beyond simply showing up. These include:

1. **Come prepared** – Every topic/week will have learning objectives. Our time together is dialogue centered and on many occasions you will be asked to provide summaries, work with your colleagues and report on your own work. Many details for the semester's work will be communicated and practiced when we are together so come prepared to engage the topic of the day.
2. **Ask any and all questions** regarding the text, lecture material or work. If you have a question, chances are someone else does too, so don't be afraid to ask.
3. **Relate the material to your own experiences and share these with the class** – this will help create a better understanding for everyone. It also helps us understand that we are not alone in our quest for good work or our experiences. The most important learning for both you and I comes in sharing small (and large) things that happen to us when we work.
4. **Demonstrate your communication skills on a regular basis**. This means preparing for and giving effective oral presentations, writing with clarity and purpose, working productively in small groups, actively listening to the contributions of other

members of the class and thinking critically about central issues related to communication, organization, work and society.

5. For your assignments, do your best with the time available. With respect to this, 'the printer/disk/computer/email/dog ate my assignment' is not an excuse for late work. Some important advice I once received: "it will always need improvement, you will never have enough time, use all your resources and do your best". Life is a work in progress. ☺

### Course Requirements:

#### **Breakdown of Assignments:**

Class contribution (written and oral)	= 50
Quest for Good Work Group Project (report & exposition)	= 200
Tests (3 @ 50)	= 150
Final Exam	= 100
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Total	= 500

#### **Description of Assignments (overview – more details on WebCT) :**

##### *Class contribution (oral and written)*

You will be responsible for formally contributing to class learning once towards the end of the semester. The aim of this work is to build a collection of resources for the class for them to draw on before the final exam. This piece of work is worth 50 points. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of class, I will circulate a list of dates for you to sign up for. Your contribution can be something you saw on the web, read in a paper, magazine, or a book review but must meet the specific criteria outlined on webct. Feel free to bring your ideas to us before the contribution is due. You will make a short oral presentation (5 minutes approx.) in class on the day you choose and provide copies of a summary of your contribution (1 page) for your colleagues as well as a written report (maximum 3 pages) for evaluation. More details on contribution requirements and evaluation criteria will be circulated through WebCT and reviewed in class.

##### *Quest for Good Work: Group Project*

This group project is a full semester project, requiring you to participate in an organizational context as soon as possible. This piece of work is worth 200 points in total. Based in both library research and on site investigation of a workplace, the aim of this piece of work is for students to be able to analyze the communicative and organizing practices necessary to and sometimes inhibiting of good work. Groups will be randomly assigned and will have class time allotted to group meetings every week (usually Mondays). This project consists of both a written report and an in-class exposition. A comprehensive explanation of this piece of work will be discussed in class in Week 2 and presented on webct. Groups will also be asked to choose an exposition date in week 2. Both the written report and exposition are due on the same day.

##### *Tests:*

There are 3 tests in this class, all timed for the first half of the semester (see attached schedule). Each test is worth 50 points for a total of 150 points. Tests will be a mixture of objective and short answer questions and will cover the conceptual material presented in the text and in class.

*Final Exam:*

The final exam for this class is **Wednesday December 14 from 11:20am to 1:30pm**. It will be comprehensive with a mixed format to be discussed closer to time in class. This piece of work is worth 100 points.

**Course policies:**

1. **Attendance and participation:** You're an adult and can decide for yourself if you need to miss class, however, given the nature of the work in the class, attendance is expected, and socially required. If you want to learn and do well, there is no substitute for being present. Our time together is structured so that those who both attend and participate have a greater chance of performing well. A lot of knowledge you will need for the semester and for your work will be discussed when we meet. If you do have to miss our meetings, it is your responsibility to catch up on what was discussed from one of your colleagues.
2. **Due dates:** All work is due at the beginning of class on their due date. Please do not miss our meetings to complete work that is due. Late work will receive a **10% penalty for each day** it is late including weekends and holidays. 'Accommodations' can be arranged for legitimate and verifiable absences if supported by appropriate documentation (medical certificates for health conditions, letters from supervisors for participation in university sponsored activities, notification of serious family emergencies or religious observances etc). If the absence is known ahead of time, you must make arrangements with us **before** the work is due.
3. **Written work:** All work must be typed, double spaced, and in APA format for citing sources. Please do not email us your work unless absolutely necessary. We expect your work to be of college quality, which means -- proper spelling, organization and grammar. For your own protection, please keep a back-up of your work (both hand written and typed).
4. **Incompletes:** Incompletes will be granted only in cases of extreme extenuating circumstances and according to departmental policy. Please see us ASAP if you are in such a situation.
5. **Complaints/evaluation appeals:** We will not discuss specific evaluations on any work the day it is returned. If you wish to appeal your evaluation, you must submit a **written** appeal to Kirsti **no later than one week** following the return of the work. We will consider only written appeals and will schedule a meeting to discuss your appeal and your understanding of the concepts involved. **Please do not contest evaluations over email**. If you cannot talk to us in person, civilly, about your work performance, we are not interested in what you have to say about it. This policy is not intended to provide obstacles to appeals, rather it is designed to ensure justice and due process for all concerned. It also allows you to demonstrate mastery over the topics we cover in class!
6. **Academic/professional integrity:** You're too smart to cheat. If you are thinking about it, please familiarize yourself with the proper university policies (see the General Catalog, pages 37-39). At the minimum, you will receive a failing evaluation for the work on which you surrendered your morality and dignity.
7. **Evaluation standards:** Perfect attendance and completing the minimum requirements on a piece of work does not guarantee you an 'A' or make you exemplary in this class. If you meet only the minimum requirements, you can expect a 'C' evaluation. **'B' and 'A' evaluations are conceptual, critical or evaluative**

movements beyond the core requirements. Just because you spend a lot of time on a piece of work does not mean that the finished product is above average. Although we will be looking for specific requirements for each piece of work (to be shared later), the following criteria generally guide our evaluations of your 'good work':

**A: Exceptional** – much more than was expected and beyond all other evaluations. Work is clearly focused and in-depth, well planned, organized and written. Your work demonstrates a thorough understanding of and clearly references several key issues and readings (both inside and outside the course) as well as providing detailed and clear examples. This is integrative, innovative and original thinking, with arguments convincingly articulated and supported. Your writing shows careful observation, analysis and interpretation and is insightful, clear, sophisticated and vivid. I learned something valuable from you.

**B: Good, clearly above average.** This is competent, informed work. Your work is well supported with reading and evidence, organized and written. You demonstrate a clear understanding of and clearly reference key issues and readings from the course, and provide detailed and clear examples. Your work shows mastery of course concepts plus some independent thought and deals with an interesting and appropriate topic. Your writing shows careful observation, analysis and interpretation and includes some materials outside the course. Demonstrates excellent written and oral communication and has exceeded minimum requirements.

**C: Average – directions followed.** This is adequate or satisfactory work. You have responded to all minimum requirements and demonstrate a general understanding of the major issues. Your work includes relevant material from the class and provides general examples. Your writing is competent and ready on the assigned date, well organized and easy to read.

**D: You can do better than this.** Work misses major parts of the assignment, writing is brief or careless and course concepts are applied incorrectly. Ideas are not clearly expressed or supported by readings or examples.

**F: Work is late, too brief, extremely disorganized or possibly plagiarized.** There is little fit to the assignment or very little application of course concepts. Ideas are few and poorly expressed. You show little understanding of the issues.

**Please note:** This class operates a plus/minus policy on grades. We find this to be a more sophisticated way of determining work quality and individual performance. Group work will result in the same grade for all members. It is up to the group to 'manage' individual contributors and contributions. If your group is facing problems, please come and see us as soon as possible to get back on track and protect your evaluation. Tests will be scored numerically while the exposition and good work project will receive letter grades according to the scale above. Final class grades will be based on the following levels:

A+ = 97% and above	B+ = 87-89%	C+ = 77-79%	D+ = 67-69%
A = 94-96%	B = 84-86%	C = 74-76%	D = 64-66%
A- = 90-93%	B- = 80-83%	C- = 70-73%	F = 64 and below

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

**Note:** This is a tentative syllabus. We reserve the right to amend it should the need arise. However, we will keep the best interests of the students in mind when doing so, and a new syllabus reflecting the changes will be made immediately available to them.

<b>Week/Date</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
1 August 22	INTRODUCTION TO THE CLASS	CHAPTER 1: THINKING ABOUT ORGANIZING AND COMMUNICATING	WHAT IS GOOD WORK?
2 August 29	CHAPTER 2: STRUCTURE AND PROCESS	CHAPTER 2: STRUCTURE AND PROCESS	INTRODUCING THE QUEST FOR GOOD WORK
3 September 5	<b>N O C L A S S</b>	CHAPTERS 3, 4, & 5 – RATIONALITY, CULTURE & IDENTITY	CHAPTERS 3, 4, & 5 – RATIONALITY, CULTURE & IDENTITY
4 September 12	<b>TEST 3 – CH 3, 4, 5</b> <b>GROUP WORK</b>	CHAPTERS 3, 4, & 5 – RATIONALITY, CULTURE & IDENTITY	CHAPTERS 3, 4, & 5 – RATIONALITY, CULTURE & IDENTITY
5 September 19	CHAPTERS 7 & 8 – LEADERSHIP & PARTICIPATION	CHAPTERS 7 & 8 – LEADERSHIP & PARTICIPATION	CHAPTERS 7 & 8 – LEADERSHIP & PARTICIPATION
6 September 26	<b>TEST 3 – CH 7 &amp; 8</b> <b>GROUP WORK</b>	CHAPTERS 7 & 8 – LEADERSHIP & PARTICIPATION	CHAPTERS 7 & 8 – LEADERSHIP & PARTICIPATION
7 October 3	CHAPTERS 6, 9, & 10 – SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, POWER & CONFLICT	CHAPTERS 6, 9, & 10 – SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, POWER & CONFLICT	CHAPTERS 6, 9, & 10 – SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, POWER & CONFLICT
8 October 10	<b>TEST 3 – CH 6, 9, 10</b> <b>GROUP WORK</b>	CHAPTERS 6, 9, & 10 – SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, POWER & CONFLICT	CHAPTERS 6, 9, & 10 – SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, POWER & CONFLICT
9 October 17	ENCOURAGING GOOD WORK: ETHICS & RATIONALITY REVISITED	ENCOURAGING GOOD WORK: ETHICS & RATIONALITY REVISITED	ENCOURAGING GOOD WORK: ETHICS & RATIONALITY REVISITED
<b>Week/Date</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Friday</b>

10 October 24	TECHNOLOGY, STRUCTURE AND PROCESS REVISITED	TECHNOLOGY, STRUCTURE AND PROCESS REVISITED	GOOD WORK EXPOSITIONS 1 & 2
11 October 31	REDESIGNING BUILT ENVIRONMENTS	REDESIGNING BUILT ENVIRONMENTS	GOOD WORK EXPOSITIONS 3 & 4
12 November 7	GLOBALIZATION, DIVERSITY AND PARTICIPATION REVISITED	GLOBALIZATION, DIVERSITY AND PARTICIPATION REVISITED	GOOD WORK EXPOSITIONS 5 & 6
13 November 14	WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND REVISITING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK	WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND REVISITING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK	GOOD WORK EXPOSITIONS 7 & 8
14 November 21	FALL RECESS	FALL RECESS	FALL RECESS
15 November 28	CLASS CONTRIBUTIONS	CLASS CONTRIBUTIONS	CLASS CONTRIBUTIONS
16 December 5	CLASS CONTRIBUTIONS	CLASS CONTRIBUTIONS	FINAL REVIEW SESSION

**FINAL EXAM ☺**

**WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 14, 11:20 AM -  
1:20 PM**