Course Syllabus CMM 241 G

Organizational Communication

Number of ECTS credits: 6

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Course Description

People have always felt the need to form groups for a variety of reasons. Any
group is composed of features such as a search for goals, the need for
structure, the creation and abiding of rules and expectations as well as the
necessity to lead or be governed. All these features are undertaken through the
use of human communication since without it the organization would simply
cease to exist. Organizations in the widest and more modern sense of the word
are involved in events such as hostile take-overs, lay-offs and mergers,
innovation, change and other events that force us to examine the relationship
between communication and organizations.
The course familiarizes students with the dynamics of interpersonal and small-
group communication within members of an organization which for the
purposes of the course is defined in its broadest possible sense (from local
volunteer organizations to major multinational companies).
It introduces the theory and practice (mainly though case studies) used by
organizations to plan, develop, implement and evaluate a variety of
communication strategies and tactics used from both an internal and external
communication perspective. Particular attention will be given to how Public
Relations can be used to generate goodwill. Students will be tasked with
proposing and defending a comprehensive communication plan for a newly-
created company.
Course Prerequisites (if any):
None

Learning Objectives
1) To distinguish various media critically and thoughtfully, based on characteristics, audience, users, effects and applicability
2) To describe and compare theories, concepts, authors and paradigms of the domains within the communication science
3) To reflect critically on the role of media and communication in social, cultural, economic, psychological, technological, political, legal and other contexts.
4) To assess the impact of social, cultural, economic, psychological, technological, political, legal and other factors on the communication process
5) To identify the ethical dimension of a communication problem and to acknowledge different points of view.

These learning objectives are in line with the following Discipline Learning Outcomes for the Bachelor in Communications Sciences as reflected by the NVAO: DL02, DL03, DL08, DL9 and DLO11

Learning Outcomes

Acquired Knowledge
* Become familiar with the main aspects involved in creating a comprehensive Communications Plan for an organization
* Fine tune the ability to deal with human communication-driven problems or challenges
* Gain an understanding of the rules and norms that should govern any organization
* Appreciate the legal aspects inherent in creating and then operating an organization.
* Become familiar with a number of major organizational communication theories and models
* Understand and effectively make use of the specialized vocabulary
* Gain an understanding of how best to conduct meetings, negotiate and resolve conflicts
* Gain management skills in the organization of events

Applying Knowledge
* Draft a realistic and comprehensive Communication Plan
* Study and reflect upon a steady stream of human communication-driven case studies
* Ability to defend the Communication Plan in front of professionals and practitioners

Skills
* Presentation skills
* Writing Skills (newsletters, press releases, advertorials)
* Critical thinking
* Meeting deadlines and time management
* Gaining familiarity with the main CMM authors /literature
* Ability to assess various communication models for their effectiveness and relevance

**Attitudes:**
* Develop strong networking and leadership skills
* Develop an aptitude to work in multinational groups under strict deadlines
* Ensure that every student feels responsible for the quality of the finished work and contributes equally to the final product
* Adopt a professional attitude
* Desire to apply life-long skills.

**Course schedule**
Note that the present calendar is tentative. The course relies heavily on student participation and its pedagogical approach is very much based on interactive teaching and is **dialogical** in nature. Note that 200 level students are expected to read between 45 and 60 pages on a weekly basis.

The basic thematic and chronological structure of the course is as follows:

**WEEK 1**  
**Introduction to the course/ Syllabus Review**
Organization proposal and formation of groups (4 students)
Leading Question: How does a subjectivist versus an objectivist approach to an organizational dynamic impact on human behaviour?
Creating the company: mission and vision statements

**WEEK 2**  
Read case study 1 (reader): *I Heard it Through the Grapevine*
Come to class prepared to discuss it and having considered the questions at the end of the case study.
Leading Question: How does one define and then create the conditions for a specific or predetermined culture to underpin the organization?
Further reading: Organizational Typology: *Cultural Classification: Linear-Active/Multi-Active/ Reactive Profiles* (reader)

**WEEK 3**  
Read case study 2 (reader): *Making Sense of Creativity and Constraints*
Leading Question: How do multinational members and cross-cultural dynamics both enhance and hinder effective communication in an organization?
Student Presentation
Further reading: *Japan Case Study* (reader)

**WEEK 4**  
Read case study 3 (reader): *Submerging the Emerging Culture*
Organizational Communication Theory: The Organizational Control Theory: The Carnegie School of Organizational Change
Student Presentations
Leading Question: How can leaders fundamentally transform organizational culture?
WEEK 5  Read case study 4 (reader): *There is No Smile on Your Face*
Organizational Communication Theory: Theory X, Y and Z
Student Presentations.
Status report on Communication Plan Project
**Leading Question:** How do theories and models enhance organizational efficacy?
Further reading: *The Sponsor as the face of organizational change* by H. James Harrington and Douglas Nelson (www.pmi.org)

WEEK 6  Last week for student presentations
Read Case study 5 (reader): *The Uncooperative Cooperative*
Devising the Credo of the organization.
**Leading Question:** How and why does the credo dramatically strengthen the foundations of an organization?

WEEK 7  **Mid-term exam.** The mid-term exam covers material from the lectures, the theories and models, presentations and case studies (for additional information see description of activities below).
**Formal presentation of the organization created by the students** (first part of the Communication Plan)

WEEK 8  Read: What is Organizational Discourse? (Organizational Discourse)
**Leading Question:** What are the main perspectives when analyzing organizational discourse?
Lecture: Introducing the art and craft of Public Relations: definition(s) of the term, profiling the PR Manager and understanding when and how to apply a PR strategy

WEEK 9  Read: Coordination and Organizing (Organizational Discourse)
Internal versus external communication (guest speaker)
**Leading Question:** How do Culture, Identity and Ideology combine in an organizational setting?
Further reading: *Organizational Culture - Often Invalid?* by Richard D. Lewis (www.crossculture.com)
Theory: The Hawthorne Effect
Public Relations: case studies (i)
External CMM: How to write a press/media release

WEEK 10  Public Relations case studies (II): the reactive and the proactive approaches
Theory: Group-think
External CMM: how to write newsletters and advertorials
**Leading Question:** How can PR be a contributing factor towards achieving organizational agility?
Further reading (reader): *Agility: It Rhymes with Stability and Why Agility Pays*
WEEK 11  Public Relations case studies (III): Major crisis and disasters
External CMM: Corporate Magazine
Lecture: Organizing a press conference
Leading Question: How does effective Media Management impact on media coverage in times of crisis?
Further reading: 9 PR Fiascos That Were Handled Brilliantly by Management by Kim Bhazin (www.businessinsider.com)

WEEK 12  Formal Presentation and Defence of the Communication Component (second and final part of the Communication Plan)

WEEK 13 Read: Meetings: Negotiations, Decision-Making and Conflicts (Organizational Discourse)
Lecture: The Promotion Policy
How to organize an Open House
Leading Question: How do effective PR and Media Management impact on brand identification?

WEEK 14  Leading Question: How does one use communication to enhance motivation?
Theory: The classic 4 theories of motivation

WEEK 15  Final Exam. Study the material discussed in class after week 7 (for additional information see description of activities below)

Course Materials
Textbook: Organizational Discourse by François Cooren (2015)
Publisher: Polity

A reader containing the case studies and various articles will be provided by the end of week 1 at the latest.

Reference books
Case Studies in Organizational Communication - Perspectives in Contemporary Work Life (Edited by Beverly Davenport Sypher)

Communication and Organizational Culture: A Key to Understanding Work Experience by Joann N. Keyton (2011)

Internal Communication: A Manual for Practitioners (PR in Practice) by Liam FitzPatrick and Klavs Valskov (2014)


Case Studies and Additional Sources:
Students are strongly encouraged to regularly access and consult the following sites:
www.organizationalcommunication.org
www.icahdq.org (International Communication Association)
www.melcrum.com (focus on Internal Communication)
www.iabc.com (International Association of Business Communicators)
www.mckinsey.com (see articles in the reader)
www.crossculture.com
Register at ijoc.org in order to access high-quality articles and case studies
(International Journal of Communication/ USC)
Additional articles and material to supplement the course are made available on
Pointcarré. Handouts will also be distributed in class.

Course Assessment
The students will be evaluated on the basis of their performance as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Plan (small group project)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations (2)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Please note that a 200 level course typically entails reading between 45 and 60
pages a week, completing assignments which are at least 3000 to 3500 words long
that the film package requires at least 7 readings and doing a 10 minute oral
presentation.

Grading Scale of Vesalius College

Vesalius College grading policy, in line with the Flemish Educational norms, is now as
stated follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Scale of 20</th>
<th>Scale of 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>17.0-20.0</td>
<td>85-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>16.1-16.9</td>
<td>81-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>15.3-16.0</td>
<td>77-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>14.5-15.2</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>13.7-14.4</td>
<td>69-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>13.1-13.6</td>
<td>66-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>12.3-13.0</td>
<td>62-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>11.5-12.2</td>
<td>58-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>10.7-11.4</td>
<td>54-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>10.0-10.6</td>
<td>50-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-9.9</td>
<td>0-49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Description of activities and Grading Criteria (only general grading criteria in this section)

**ORAL**

Small group presentation: 5% of the grade
Students will be working in groups of 3 or 4 in view of a 20 minute PowerPoint presentation on a specific topic linked to the working environment. Students also need to hand in a copy of the presentation and complete a two-page (bullet points allowed) summary of the main points of the presentation which they need to distribute to their fellow students. Please note that such presentations can be used as a basis for a midterm and/or final exam question. A full list will be provided and discussed in class, in the meantime consider the sample of topics hereunder:

1) Managerial and Leadership Styles
2) Stress and Burnout at work
3) The 10 companies with the best working environment
4) The New World of Work
5) The Human Resource Department
6) Cross-cultural organizational communication
7) Managing an international/cross-cultural team
8) From Cooperatives to a Participatory Economy
9) The Fathers of Public Relations: Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays

Small group presentation Communication Plan: 10% of the grade

Students working on the Communication Plan will first formally present their company in a 10 to 15 minute presentation around week 7. This will allow the professor to provide both oral and written feedback to help ascertain that the project on the whole is on the right track. Students are expected to incorporate all the feedback and comments received that week in the final version of the Plan to be handed in on week 12.

On week 12, the various groups will formally present their Communication Plan in front of a 2-member jury which will assess them on an individual basis.

**WRITTEN**

Communication Plan: 40% of the grade

This comprehensive plan is the major assignment of the course and is meant to smartly incorporate all the elements, criteria, theories and models that have been discussed in class from week 1. It is expected that students contribute evenly and fairly to the final product. A system is implemented wherewith the nominal leader of the group may decide, after consulting with the professor, whether the written report should be evaluated collectively or on an individual basis. This will ensure that 1) students are assessed according to their level of participation and input 2) that no student is allowed to take advantage of the group dynamic and still manage to undeservedly get a good grade and 3) that no group will be penalized on account of the poor performance of one of its members. Members of the group will also be asked to assess the leadership and organizational skills of the nominal leader. As soon as reasonably possible, the students are asked to compile a list of all the
criteria the individual students within the group have been asked to complete. This list will then have to be submitted to the professor for approval and subsequently included in the written report of the Plan as well (first page). Students will equally be tasked with presenting/introducing the company on week 7. (oral presentation -10% of the grade) The assumption is that they are addressing a group of potential investors. They will present the actual communication aspect of the plan on week 12. The assumption this time is that they are presenting the organization in a press conference-type setting (simulation). The presentations should not exceed 20 minutes.

With regards to the written portion of the Communication Plan (30% of the grade) the following criteria will be taken into consideration:

1) The quality of the organization of the Plan (quality of headlines, text and graphics, degree of legibility)
2) The quality of the topics and criteria selected (whether the topic was completely addressed, whether statements were supported by facts and detailed examples)
3) The quality of the examples, images and illustrations/photographs and captions
4) The literary quality of the content (grammar, spelling, punctuation).

The rule of thumb is that each student should contribute in total around 10 to 12 pages (3000 to 3500 words) to the entire Plan. The list of Communication-driven criteria (part two of the Plan) is somewhat flexible, therefore the length of the Plan can be extended based on the number of participants (4 students = 40 to 45 pages for instance). While most of the criteria can be handled on an individual basis by the various members of the group, some criteria (such as the completion of the corporate magazine or the corporate video) need to be completed by all the members of the group working as a unit.

**EXAMS**

Both the mid-term and the final exam rely on the material seen and discussed in class. Typically an exam would contain up to 5 questions which cover the lectures, student presentations, in-class discussions as well as the assigned chapters in the textbook and the case studies in the reader. No multiple choice questions are included.

The goal of the exams is to ensure that the students have mastered the relevant specialized vocabulary, can reflect intelligently on the various studies discussed in class, that they can infer and extrapolate from the issues raised and that they know what tangible and intangible elements/criteria ought to be considered when creating an organization from the ground up and the pivotal role communication plays throughout the various implementation processes.
Evaluation criteria for Peer Collaboration and Teamwork (10% out of 40%) (Communication Plan)

1) LEADERSHIP AND INITIATIVE (25% of the grade)

**Below average:**
Group members play a passive role and generate few interesting ideas.

**Average:**
Group has a tendency to do only what they are told to do by others or the professor. They do not seek help when needed.

**Satisfactory:**
Group members play a somewhat active role in generating some ideas and take some initiative.

**Good:**
Group takes initiative to get things organized and completed. A solid dynamic is established between group members and is maintained throughout the assignments.

**Excellent:**
Group members provide the requisite leadership and the needed support throughout the assignment. The workload is evenly spread out and everybody feels free to contribute and provide feedback.

**Outstanding:**
Group members were able to thoughtfully and effectively organize and divide the work. They frequently check on progress and discuss the assignment on a regular basis. The workload is evenly and effectively distributed. Focus is provided throughout the duration of the project and a direction is well understood and fully embraced by all members.

2) FACILITATION AND SUPPORT (25% of the grade)

**Below average:**
Group members appear unable or unwilling to help others, make non-constructive criticisms in relation to the project or other members of the group.

**Average:**
Members are willing to contribute but are unwilling or unable to create the conditions for a truly dynamic flow of information and creativity to emerge.

**Satisfactory:**
Group members on the whole demonstrate a willingness to help other group members. A reasonable flow of information circulates and creativity is detected.
**Good:**
Group members actively listen to each other whenever asked. They actively listen to the ideas of others and contribute to creating a positive working environment.

**Excellent:**
Group members actively checked with others to understand how each member is progressing and how he/she can be of help.

**Outstanding:**
Group members are perfectly in tune and have created a group dynamic which is characterized by a high level of energy and constant creativity and an intelligent/stimulating exchange of ideas. Members actively understand how each member is progressing and how he/she can be of help. Synergy is palpable!

3) CONTRIBUTION AND WORK ETHIC (50% of the grade)

**Below average:**
Group members are frequently off-track and do not complete the various sections of the group project in a timely and effective fashion.

**Average:**
Group members’ dynamic may have worked out but problems such as attendance and/or note taking have significantly slowed down or impeded progress on the project. Some members are clearly relying on the good will and patience of other members to complete their share of the work load.

**Satisfactory:**
Group members worked significantly most of the time and met the due dates by completing the assignments.

**Good:**
Members work hard on the project and are clearly willing to put in the required amount of time and energy. Progress was constant and members are ready to work extra hours if necessary in order to successfully complete the various interim assignments.

**Excellent:**
Group members work constantly on the project, meet the due dates and provide excellent quality work throughout the entire process. Members clearly worked very hard on the project, irrespective of unforeseen conditions which might have negatively impacted the quality of the project, they are able to rebound and effectively compensate when necessary.

**Outstanding:**
Group members contribute willingly and generously, by frequently demonstrating a willingness to spend significant time outside the class to complete the project. Their attitude and interaction from start to finish proves that they abide by the highest possible ethical standards. The end result is the unmistakable reflection and outcome
of the highest possible standard that were applied and followed throughout and proof positive of the significant contribution of all members of the group.

**EVALUATION SHEET for Oral Presentations**

**Grading system:**
1- 3 poor/ insufficiently so
4- 6 moderately so/ satisfactorily so
7- 8 quite effectively
9 -10 very much so/outstandingly so

1) Was the amount and the quality of information provided throughout the presentation sufficient to present the topic in an exhaustive manner?
2) Did the presentation manifest a clear organization and structure throughout?
3) Was the introduction and the scene-setting effective?
4) Were the transitions, the overall communication flow and public speaking dynamics handled effectively?
5) How relevant, appropriate were the examples or cases provided throughout the presentation?
6) How relevant and effective was the audiovisual material used throughout?
7) How effective was the speaker's visual aspect of delivery (appearance, posture, eye contact, facial expressions, movement...)?
8) On the whole, how persuasive/ credible/ professional did the presentation appear to be?
9) How effective and coordinated were the dynamics between the members of the group?
10) Was the conclusion effective?

**Additional Course Policies**
A penalty of 10% of the assignment grade for the first 24 hours is applied and an additional 10% of the assignment grade for the next 24 hours.
Papers handed in 48 hours after the deadline will not be accepted unless there are serious legitimate reasons.
Provision of a signed medical note is required, and notice must be given prior to the deadline. All assignments must be handed in in a **hard copy format**. No assignment sent electronically will be corrected.

**Academic Honesty Statement**
Academic dishonesty is **NOT** tolerated in this course.
Academic honesty is not only an ethical issue but also the foundation of scholarship. Cheating and plagiarism are therefore serious breaches of academic integrity.
Following the College policy, cheating and plagiarism cases will be communicated in writing to the Associate Dean for Students and submitted to the Student Conduct Committee for disciplinary action. If you refer to someone else's work, appropriate references and citations must be provided. Grammar, spelling and punctuation count, so use the tools necessary to correct before handing in assignments.