**COMS 361 [Business and Professional Communication]**

**("Rise of the Info-Warrior")**

**Professor:** Richard Holt, Professor and Ph.D. [prefers everyone call him "Rich"]

**Office:** 203 Watson Hall, richholt@niu.edu

**Office Hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:00 to 11:50, or by appointment [to be held in DuSable 270 classroom]

**Reading:** Readings online, [www.richcourses.com](http://www.richcourses.com), menu item **"BP COMS (361)"**, drop to **"RIW READINGS"**

**Other Materials: *BLACKBOARD HAS NO******CLASS MATERIALS*** (excepts exams and quizzes). Find **everything else** (i.e., **syllabus**, **study guides**, **Our Thing assignments**, etc.) at [www.richcourses.com](http://www.richcourses.com)

**Overview of Course**

This course will acquaint you with theory and practice in **business and professional communication**, principally through **organizational communication**; **group communication**; **rhetoric**; **media studies;** and **interview theory**. We have two points of **departure** from the **usual** business/professional communication course: (1) our readings will be **far more scholarly** than **practical** or **applied** (hence, more **difficult**); and (2) applied materials (i.e., previously posted **practical guides**) will **not** be the focus. Rather, groups of students will compose **their own guides** and also develop **marketing** plans to **promote** them. Throughout, each student will operate as an **imaginary entity**, an **info-warrior** who is a member of a **work team**, also an imaginary **unit** in an imaginary **company**—all created by students**,** working **with** their **teams** to actualize the learning of both **theoretical and applied** material across the domains of organizational behavior: **etiquette** (the **"necessaries"**); organizational **behavior**; **group communication**; **ethics** (i.e**., rhetoric)**; **media;** and **interview theory**. Each of these subdomains will be tied to a different body of knowledge about communication studies (respectively, **"common sense" manners**; **organizational** communication; **group** communication; **rhetoric**; **media studies;** and **interview theory**).

**What is Expected of You**

**1. *Class preparation and participation*.** To get the **most** out of class, you must **complete readings** for the days they are assigned. **Unprepared**, you not only **miss** opportunities to **use your knowledge** (helping your classmates thereby), but this will **reflect negatively** on your grade. Your final grade is based in part on your **participation** (indicated primarily by how you do in the **OUR THING (OT) projects** [see drop-down menu for more information]), **determined** by a **survey** of group members to check on **how well you participated** in the group. **Completion** of these very brief surveys will also **figure in each student’s** individual **participation** **scores**.

**2. *Punctual, consistent attendance*.** Exams and quizzes are on **Blackboard** and **matched** to the dates on the syllabus as to when they will be **available** online (completion dates for quizzes and exams are **NOT NEGOTIABLE**). **Punctuality** on **in-class preparation** and **presentation** days is **mandatory**. You have **two “free” absences**; each **additional** absence costs you **20 points**.

**3. *No class disruptions*.** Some disruptive behaviors include: (1) **entering or leaving** class without **prior notice**; (2) **talking during lecture** or **"off-topic" during discussion**; and (3) **eating and drink­ing**. You are not to leave class **before it ends** (I'll announce that) without **prior authorization**. If you come in **late**, note on the roster the **time you entered**.

**4. *Grading***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type** | **Number** | **Points Each** | **Total Points** | **Composition** | **Drop Lowest?** |
| Hourly Exam | 6 | 100 points | 500 points | 25 MC [3 pts.], 3 from lecture25 T/F [1 pt.], 3 from lecture | Yes |
| Quiz | 6 | 60 points | 60 points | 3 MC [2 pts.],4 T/F [1 pt.] | No |
| OUR THING Assignment [Group Grade] | 5 | 20 points | 100 points | N/A | No |
|  Participation | N/A | N/A | 40 points | N/A | No |
| ***TOTAL*** | ***--*** | ***--*** | ***700 points*** | ***--*** | ***--*** |

***Total Possible Points for Course: 700***

**A: 700-630 B: 629-560 C: 559-490 D: 489-420 F: Below 420**

**Outline of the Course**

**Unit I: OVERVIEW, "NECESSARIES"**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Date*** | ***Topic(s)/Activities*** | ***Readings*** |
| August 22 [M] | Orientation. Overview of course content. Team assignments. | Syllabus ([www.richcourses.com](http://www.richcourses.com), "**BP COMS (361)**," drop down, "**RIW BASICS**."  |
| August 24 [W] | ***Lecture 1/A [FLIP]:*** Professional presence, customer relationship management.  | * **[QUIZ TARGET]** Bass, A. N. (2010). From business dining to public speaking: Tips for acquiring professional presence and its role in the business curricula. *American Journal of Business Education*, *3*(2), 57-63.​ ***Quiz on Blackboard,*** ***online 8/24 [8:00am], offline, 8/26 [11:59pm]***
 |
| August 29 [M] | ***Lecture 1/B [WOKE]:*** Informed consent, SPEAKING model. | * Granero-Molina, J., Fernandez-Sola, C., & Aguilera-Manrique, G. (2009). Applying a sociolinguistic model to the analysis of informed consent documents. *Nursing* *Ethics*, *16*(6), 797-812.
 |
| August 31 [W] | ***Lecture 1/C [EASY]:*** College training in etiquette, human relations. | * Lovett, M., & Jones, I.S. (2008). Social/interpersonal skills in business: In field, curriculum and student perspectives. *Journal of Management and Marketing Research*, *1*, 75-99.
 |
| September 2 [F] | ***First Examination*** | ***Study Guide for First Examination******On Blackboard, online 9/2 [8:00am], offline 9/4 [11:59pm]*** |

**Unit II: MEASURING [Organizational Communication]**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Date*** | ***Topic(s)/Activities*** | ***Readings*** |
| **September 5 [M]** | ***LABOR DAY*** | ***UNIVERSITY CLOSED*** |
| September 7 [W] | ***Lecture 2/A [SPAN]:***Big assumptions, competing commitments, transmissive process.  | * **[QUIZ TARGET]** Kegan, R., & Lahey, L.L. (2001). The real reason people won't change. *Harvard Business Review*, *77*, 51-58. ***Quiz on Blackboard*, *online 9/7 [8:00am], offline 9/9 [11:59pm]***
 |
| September 9 [F] | ***In-class team work, OT01*** | **OUR THING description [OT01]** |
| September 12 [M] | ***Lecture 2/B [COGS]****:* Climate, commitment, networks. | * Guzley, R. M. (1992). Organizational climate and communication climate. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *5*(4), 379-402.
 |
| September 14 [W] | ***Lecture 2/C [GROW]****:* Active communication, getting information. | * Westside Toastmasters. (n.d.). Leader communications planning.
 |
| September 16 [F] | ***In-class team work, OT01*** | **Project 1 description** **[OUR THING 01]** |
| September 19 [M] | ***Performance, OT01*** ***(Team01, Team02)******Teams noted turn in written work on presentation day*** | **OUR THING description [OT01]** |
| September 21 [W] | ***Performance, OT01******(Team03, Team04)******Teams noted turn in written work on presentation day*** | **OUR THING description [OT01]** |
| September 23 [F] | ***Second Examination*** | ***Study Guide for Second Examination******On Blackboard, online 9/23 [8:00am]; offline 9/25 [11:59pm]*** |

**Unit III: COOPERATING [Group Communication]**

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| ***Date*** | ***Topic(s)/Activities*** |  |
| September 26 [M] | ***Lecture 3/A [SPAT]****:* Negotiated order in groups. Power conflict, styles. | * [**QUIZ TARGET**] Jehn, K. A. (1997). A qualitative analysis of conflict types and dimensions in organizational groups. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *42*(3), 530-557. ***Quiz on Blackboard, online, 9/26 [8:00am], offline 9/28 [11:59pm]***
 |
| September 28 [W] | ***Lecture 3/B [HOLD]****:* Decision quality, dissent, intervention. | * Klocke, U. (2007). How to improve decision making in small groups: Effects of dissent and training interventions. *Small Group Research*, *38*(3), 437-468.
 |
| September 30 [F] | ***Lecture 3/C [SWAY]****:* Groups and virtual communication. | * Warketin, M., & Beranek, P. M. (1999). Training to improve virtual team communication. *Information Systems Journal*, *9*, 271-289.
 |
| October 3 [M] | ***Performance, OT02*** ***(Team02, Team04)******Teams presenting turn in written work that same day*** | **OUR THING description [OT02, “Brands of Coffee”]** |
| October 5 [W] | ***Performance, OT02*** ***(Team01, Team03)******Teams presenting turn in written work that same day*** | **OUR THING description [OT02, “Brands of Coffee”]** |
| October 7 [F] | ***Third Examination*** | ***Study Guide for Third Examination*** ***On Blackboard, online 10/7 [8:00am], offline 10/9 [11:59pm]*** |

**Unit IV: LEADING [Rhetoric]**

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| ***Date*** | ***Topic(s)/Activities*** |  |
| October 10 [M] | ***Lecture 4/A [CORE]****:* Corporate rhetoric. Foundations of classical rhetoric. | * **[QUIZ TARGET]** Cheney, G., Christensen, L.T., Conrad, C., & Lair, D. J. (2004). Corporate rhetoric as organizational discourse. In D. Grant, C. Hardy, C. Oswick, & L. Putnam (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Discourse* (pp. 79-103. Sage. ***Quiz on Blackboard,*** ***online 10/10 [8:00am], offline 10/12 [11:59pm]***
 |
| October 12 [W] | ***Lecture 4/B [AREA]****:* Decision quality, dissent, intervention. | * Klocke, U. (2007). How to improve decision making in small groups: Effects of dissent and training interventions. *Small Group Research*, *38*(3), 437-468.
 |
| October 14 [F] | ***Lecture 4/C [FACE]****:* Corporate rhetoric. Organizational discourse. Ethics and behavior. Social capital. | * Taylor, M. (2011). Building social capital through rhetoric and public relations. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *25*(3), 436-454.
 |
| October 17 [M] | ***Performance, OT03*** ***(Teams 02 and 03)******Teams presenting turn in written work that same day*** | **Project 3 Description** **OUR THING description [OT03, “Mr. Tibbs”]** |
| October 19 [W] | ***Performance, OT03*** ***(Teams 01 and 04)******Teams presenting turn in written work that same day*** | **Project 3 Description****OUR THING description [OT03, “Mr. Tibbs”]** |
| October 21 [F] | ***Fourth Examination*** | ***Study Guide for Fourth Examination*** ***On Blackboard, online 10/21 [8:00am], offline 10/23 [11:59pm]*** |

**Unit V: REACHING OUT [Media Studies]**

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| ***Date*** | ***Topic(s)/Activities*** | ***Readings*** |
| October 24 [M] | ***Lecture 5/A [MELD]****:* Levels of learning.  | * **[QUIZ TARGET]** Dennis, A.R., Fuller, R.M., & Valacich, J.S. (2008). Media, tasks, and communication processes: A theory of media synchronicity. *MIS Quarterly*, *32*(3), 575-600. ***Quiz online, 10/24 [8:00am], offline, 10/26 [11:59pm]***
 |
| October 26 [W] | ***Lecture 5/B [VIEW]:*** Hidden structures of domination. | * Gilpin, D. (2010). Organizational image construction in a fragmented online media environment. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *22*(3), 265-287.
 |
| October 28 [F] | ***Lecture 5/C [CODE]:*** Choosing the “best” media/message combo. | * Rice, R. E. (1993). Media appropriateness: Using social presence theory to compare traditional and new organizational media. *Human Communication Research*, *19*(4), 451-484.
 |
| October 31 [M] | ***In-class team work, OT04*** | **Project 4 description** **[OUR THING 04: KEEPING CLOSE]** |
| November 2 [W] | ***In-class team work, OT04*** | **Project 4 description** **[OUR THING 04: KEEPING CLOSE]** |
| November 4 [F] | ***Fifth Examination*** | ***Study Guide for Fifth Examination******On Blackboard, online 11/4 [8:00am]; offline 11/6 [11:59pm]*** |
| November 7 [M] | ***JUDGMENT DAY*** | ***Complete course evaluations, get briefed on current grade.*** |
| November 9 [W] | **OUR THING04 [TEAM01]*****Team presenting turns in written work that same day*** | **Project 4 description** **[OUR THING 04: KEEPING CLOSE]** |
| November 11 [F] | **OUR THING04 [TEAM02]*****Team presenting turns in written work that same day*** | **Project 4 description** **[OUR THING 04: KEEPING CLOSE]** |
| November 14 [M] | **OUR THING04 [TEAM03]*****Team presenting turns in written work that same day*** | **Project 4 description** **[OUR THING 04: KEEPING CLOSE]** |
| November 16 [W] | **OUR THING04 [TEAM 04]*****Team presenting turns in written work that same day*** | **Project 4 description** **[OUR THING 04: KEEPING CLOSE]** |
| November 18 [F] | **DISCUSSION, SUMMARY FOR OT01-OT04** | **ALL PREVIOUS OUR THING MATERIAL** |
| November 21 [M] | **DISCUSSION, SUMMARY FOR OT01-OT04** | **ALL PREVIOUS OUR THING MATERIAL** |
| November 23-27 [W-Su] | **THANKSGIVING BREAK** | **“When it’s not always rainin’, there’ll be days like this.** **When there’s no one complainin’, there’ll be days like this.****When everything falls into place like the flick of a switch,****Well, my mama told me there’d days like this.”*****Days Like This*, Van Morrison**[**https://tinyurl.com/4efbduby**](https://tinyurl.com/4efbduby) |

**Unit VI: ASSIMILATING [The Core]**

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| ***Date*** | ***Topic(s)/Activities*** | ***Readings*** |
| November 28 [M] | ***Lecture 6/A, 6/B, 6/C [TOPICS TO BE ANNOUNCED]*** | * **[QUIZ TARGET]** ***Quiz online, 11/28 [8:00am], offline, 11/30 [11:59pm]***
 |
| November 30 [W] | ***Sixth Examination*** | ***Study Guide for Sixth Examination******On Blackboard, online [8:00am]; offline [11:59pm]*** |
| December 1 [F] | **OUR THING05 [ALL TEAMS]*****[Written only, nothing “live.”]*** | **Project 5 description** **[OUR THING 05: UNIFICATION]** |
| December 3 [Sa] | ***LAST DAY OF CLASSES*** |  |