

# 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  
**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**; and **media studies**. 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**); and **media**. Each of these five subdomains will be tied to a different body of knowledge about communication studies (respectively, "**common sense**" **manners**; **organizational** communication; **group** communication; **rhetoric**; and **media studies**).

### 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** (determined 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 brief surveys will also **figure in each student's individual participation scores**. Also, on group work days, **attendance will be taken**.

**2. Punctual, consistent attendance.** Since the class may be partially **asynchronous**, the matter of **attendance** (except for days **specified** in the syllabus) may be **subject to change** and **negotiable**. 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.** Online, there won't be any :-), so, no harm, no foul. Otherwise, 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	5	100 points	400 points	25 MC [3 pts.], 3 from lecture 25 T/F [1 pt.], 3 from lecture	Yes
Quiz	5	10 points	50 points	3 MC [2 pts.], 4 T/F [1 pt.]	No
OUR THING Assignment [Group Grade]	4	20 points	80 points	N/A	No
Participation	N/A	N/A	40 points	N/A	No
<b>TOTAL</b>	--	--	<b>570 points</b>	--	--

**Total Possible Points for Course: 570**

**A: 570-513**

**B: 512-456**

**C: 455-399**

**D: 398-342**

**F: Below 342**

# Outline of the Course

## Unit I: Overview, "NECESSARIES"

Date	Topic(s)/Activities	Readings
August 22 [M]	Orientation. Overview of course content. Team assignments.	Syllabus (www.richcourses.com, "BP COMS (361)," drop down, "RIW BASICS."
August 24 [W]	<b>Lecture 1/A [FLIP]:</b> Professional presence, customer relationship management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>[QUIZ TARGET]</b> Bass, A. N. (2010). From business dining to public speaking: Tips for acquiring professional presence and its role in the business curricula. <i>American Journal of Business Education</i>, 3(2), 57-63. <b>Quiz on Blackboard, online 8/24 [8:00am], offline, 8/26 [11:59pm]</b></li> </ul>
August 29 [M]	<b>Lecture 1/B [WOKE]:</b> Informed consent, SPEAKING model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Granero-Molina, J., Fernandez-Sola, C., &amp; Aguilera-Manrique, G. (2009). Applying a sociolinguistic model to the analysis of informed consent documents. <i>Nursing Ethics</i>, 16(6), 797-812.</li> </ul>
August 31 [W]	<b>Lecture 1/C [EASY]:</b> College training in etiquette, human relations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lovett, M., &amp; Jones, I.S. (2008). Social/interpersonal skills in business: In field, curriculum and student perspectives. <i>Journal of Management and Marketing Research</i>, 1, 75-99.</li> </ul>
September 2 [F]	<b>First Examination</b>	<b>Study Guide for First Examination</b> <b>On Blackboard, online 9/2 [8:00am], offline 9/4 [11:59pm]</b>

## Unit II: MEASURING [Organizational Communication]

Date	Topic(s)/Activities	Readings
September 5 [M]	<b>LABOR DAY</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY CLOSED</b>
September 7 [W]	<b>Lecture 2/A [SPAN]:</b> Big assumptions, competing commitments, transmissive process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>[QUIZ TARGET]</b> Kegan, R., &amp; Lahey, L.L. (2001). The real reason people won't change. <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, 77, 51-58. <b>Quiz on Blackboard, online 9/7 [8:00am], offline 9/9 [11:59pm]</b></li> </ul>
September 9 [F]	<b>In-class team work, OT01</b>	<b>OUR THING description [OT01]</b>
September 12 [M]	<b>Lecture 2/B [COGS]:</b> Climate, commitment, networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guzley, R. M. (1992). Organizational climate and communication climate. <i>Management Communication Quarterly</i>, 5(4), 379-402.</li> </ul>
September 14 [W]	<b>Lecture 2/C [GROW]:</b> Active communication, getting information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Westside Toastmasters. (n.d.). Leader communications planning.</li> </ul>
September 16 [F]	<b>NO CLASS</b>	
September 19 [M]	<b>Performance, OT01</b> <b>(Teams to be announced)</b> <b>Teams noted turn in written work on presentation day</b>	<b>OUR THING description [OT01]</b>
September 21 [W]	<b>Performance, OT01</b> <b>(Teams to be announced)</b> <b>Teams noted turn in written work on presentation day</b>	<b>OUR THING description [OT01]</b>
September 23 [F]	<b>Second Examination</b>	<b>Study Guide for Second Examination</b> <b>On Blackboard, online 9/23 [8:00am]; offline 9/25 [11:59pm]</b>

### Unit III: COOPERATING [Group Communication]

Date	Topic(s)/Activities	
September 26 [M]	<b>Lecture 3/A [SPAT]:</b> Negotiated order in groups. Power conflict, styles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>[QUIZ TARGET]</b> Jehn, K. A. (1997). A qualitative analysis of conflict types and dimensions in organizational groups. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, 42(3), 530-557. <b>Quiz on Blackboard, online, 9/26 [8:00am], offline 9/28 [11:59pm]</b></li> </ul>
September 28 [W]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lecture 3/B [HOLD]:</b> Decision quality, dissent, intervention.</li> <li>• <b>Lecture 3/C [SWAY]:</b> Groups and virtual communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Klocke, U. (2007). How to improve decision making in small groups: Effects of dissent and training interventions. <i>Small Group Research</i>, 38(3), 437-468.</li> <li>• Warkentin, M., &amp; Beranek, P. M. (1999). Training to improve virtual team communication. <i>Information Systems Journal</i>, 9, 271-289.</li> </ul>
September 30 [F]	<b>In-class team work, OT02</b>	<b>Project 2 description [OUR THING 02: BRANDS OF COFFEE]</b>
October 3 [M]	<b>Performance, OT02 (Teams to be announced)</b>  <b>Teams presenting turn in written work that same day</b>	<b>OUR THING description: OT02</b>
October 5 [W]	<b>Performance, OT02 (Teams to be announced)</b>  <b>Teams presenting turn in written work that same day</b>	<b>OUR THING02</b>
October 7 [F]	<b>Third Examination</b>	<b>Study Guide for Third Examination</b> <b>On Blackboard, online 10/7 [8:00am], offline 10/9 [11:59pm]</b>

### Unit IV: LEADING [Rhetoric]

Date	Topic(s)/Activities	Readings
October 10 [M]	<b>Lectures 4/A [CORE]; 4/B [AREA]; 4/C [FACE]:</b> Corporate rhetoric. Organizational discourse. Ethics and behavior. Social capital.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>[QUIZ TARGET]</b> Cheney, G., Christensen, L.T., Conrad, C., &amp; Lair, D. J. (2004). Corporate rhetoric as organizational discourse. In D. Grant, C. Hardy, C. Oswick, &amp; L. Putnam (Eds.), <i>The Sage Handbook of Organizational Discourse</i> (pp. 79-103. Sage. <b>Quiz on Blackboard, online 10/10 [8:00am], offline 10/12 [11:59pm]</b></li> <li>• Knouse, S.B., &amp; Giacalone, R.A. (1992). Ethical decision-making in business: Behavioral issues and concerns. <i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>, 11(5,6), 369-377.</li> <li>• Taylor, M. (2011). Building social capital through rhetoric and public relations. <i>Management Communication Quarterly</i>, 25(3), 436-454.</li> </ul>
October 12 [W]	<b>Performance, OT03 (Teams to be announced)</b>  <b>Teams presenting turn in written work that same day</b>	<b>OUR THING03</b>
October 14 [F]	<b>Fourth Examination</b>	<b>Study Guide for Fourth Examination</b> <b>On Blackboard, online 10/14 [8:00am], offline 10/16 [11:59pm]</b>
October 17 [M]	<b>Performance, OT03 (Teams to be announced)</b>  <b>Teams presenting turn in written work that same day</b>	<b>OUR THING03</b>
October 19 [W]	<b>JUDGMENT DAY</b>	<b>Complete course evaluations, get briefed on current grade.</b>

## Unit V: REACHING OUT [Media Studies]

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic(s)/Activities</i>	<i>Readings</i>
October 21 [F]	<b>Lectures 5/A [MELD], 5/B [VIEW], 5/C [RUSH]:</b> Levels of learning. Learning empowerment. Hidden structures of domination. <b>No in-class lecture: review lecture videos.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>[QUIZ TARGET]</b> Dennis, A.R., Fuller, R.M., &amp; Valacich, J.S. (2008). Media, tasks, and communication processes: A theory of media synchronicity. <i>MIS Quarterly</i>, 32(3), 575-600. <b>Quiz on Online, 10/21 [8:00am], offline, 10/23 [11:59pm]</b></li> <li>• Gilpin, D. (2010). Organizational image construction in a fragmented online media environment. <i>Journal of Public Relations Research</i>, 22(3), 265-287.</li> <li>• Rice, R. E. (1993). Media appropriateness: Using social presence theory to compare traditional and new organizational media. <i>Human Communication Research</i>, 19(4), 451-484.</li> </ul>
October 21 [F]	<b>OUR THING04</b> <b>Submissions due, all groups [written work only, no “live” performances].</b>	<b>Project 4 description [OUR THING 04]</b>
October 24 [M]	<b>Fifth Examination</b>	<b>Study Guide for Fifth Examination</b> <b>On Blackboard, online 4/18 [8:00am]; offline 4/20 [11:59pm]</b>