COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Title: Organizational Communication, Change, and Development

Course Number: COMS850

Credit Hours: Three (3.0)

Instructor: Michele McMaster, Ph.D.
Office hours:
Tuesday, 4:30-6:30 p.m.
Wednesday, 3:00-4:00 p.m.
Thursday, 3:00-4:00 p.m.

Office location: E2560
Office phone: 708/534-4049
E-mail address: m-mcmaster@govst.edu

Trimester: Fall, 2005
Wednesday, 7:30-10:20 p.m.

Catalog Description: Designed to help students analyze the human elements involved in the functioning of an organization; to better understand the role of a change agent in the planning and application of organizational communication change and development strategies, and to evaluate the present and potential impact of organizational change/development communication applications.

Prerequisites: Graduate student standing.

Restrictions: None.

Intended Audience: This is for graduate students in the communication programs. It is required in the communication studies portion of the major.

Rationale: As a result of societal and global changes, a different expectation of the role and function of traditional organizations and institutions has evolved. Concomitantly, organizational change and development, when considered as a communication process, offers critical factors for organizations as they work to humanistically respond to these changing internal and external demands. More
specifically this course is designed to expose students to the ways in which communication takes place in an organization so students will be able to recognize communication patterns and change them and the organization through the influence of communication.

**Expected Student Outcomes:** Upon the completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Identify and analyze the human elements in the functioning of an organization, including formal and informal: leadership, management styles, authority, power, influence, decision-making processes, motivation, communication flow, conflict resolution, and control.
2. Identify feedback loops that impede change in an organization and propose and test theories to investigate these feedback loops.
3. Develop, apply, and evaluate change strategies based on systems thinking and chaos/complexity models.
4. Identify philosophy and values underlying organizational communication and organizational change and analyze the ways these things impede change.
5. Develop reasons for individual and organizational change and propose and apply ideas for leveraging the system to manifest that change.
6. Identify and substantiate personal speculation on the results of current trends and issues in the organizational change, communication, and development.
7. Propose theories on the roles of the individual in organizational change and test these theories.
8. Analyze the impact on organizational change, communication, and development of the concept: think globally; act locally.

**Instructional Activities:** Class activities will include:

- *Lectures/Discussions* are designed to present new material about communication to the group and then to help students work through the new communication concepts by providing a forum for inquiring. Students will be expected to share their observations about communication in class discussions.
- *Participation* improves learning by trying out ideas that the students are developing. It is expected and encouraged that every student will participate. The classroom setting is structured to be a safe environment.
- *Tests* are given for self-discovery and self awareness, not for testing a student’s knowledge of the subject matter.
- *Small group discussions* are designed to assist students to work with others on a project that will require them to apply communication principles to an everyday activity.
- *Visualization* is designed to look at an individual’s potential influence within the organization, including the exploration of mental models. The goal—with greater awareness comes better communication skills.
- *Written projects* are designed to assist students in developing skill in using these communication techniques. They will be asked to demonstrate their ability to apply what they learned in this class through a series of papers.
• *Journal* is to note the experiential results of the application of the techniques and tools being learned. This is done by students to benefit them in creating their assignments, not to be submitted as an assignment.

• *Application* is important as students look for ways to use the course materials in their daily lives and recognize the impact of the application of the communication tools to their communication environments.

• *Videos* are presented to provide students with a broader understanding of the topics being presented.

• *Thinking* is expected of students as they reflect on class materials and discover the type of impact these communication theories and skills will have on their everyday lives.

• *Excellence* is what is expected from students in this class. Excellence is defined as the ability students have to live out of their own best abilities and standards and not those of others. What is the most you can be or do to satisfy and delight yourself? This is excellence. This is different from perfection, which only brings guilt and a sense of failure.

• *Fun* is not always frivolous, but always pleasurable. It makes people feel good about themselves. When students are enjoying themselves, generally more learning occurs. Laughter is encouraged.

*Teaching/Learning Philosophy:* Learning is fun. It makes your mind stretch and wrinkles your brain. It shows you how excellent you are and that thinking is a challenging and enjoyable activity. Students can expect:

• assignments will be explained as clearly as possible.

• to inquire if they are still confused about any point discussed in class.

• that communication will be explained as a spectrum of processes.

• ideas to be explained from the general to the specific, from the overview down to the example.

• an atmosphere of acceptance where students can find personal success and delight in gaining knowledge.

• as much as is possible the class will be student-driven.

Some place in Chinese philosophy there is the idea that good teachers do not teach anyone anything but, instead, remind students of what they have forgotten. This is a class about remembering the forgotten.

*Text:*


Other readings as assigned.

*Course Content:*

*Week 1* - 9/7/05
Discuss syllabus. What is communication in an organization? How does it differ from communication in everyday life—or does it? How is thinking related to communication? Read Capra, Chapter 1 and Lewin/Regine, Chapter 1.

**Week 2 - 9/14/05**
Read Capra, Chapter 2 and Lewin/Regine, Chapter 2. Discuss change and mental models. **OCE #1 is due.**

**Week 3 - 9/21/05**
Read Capra, Chapter 3 and Lewin/Regine, Chapter 3. Discuss Gebser.

**Week 4 - 9/28/05**
Read Capra, Chapter 4 and Lewin/Regine, Chapter 4 and the Preamble. Discuss fields and systems. **OCE #2 is due.**

**Week 5 - 10/5/05**
Read Capra, Chapter 5 and Lewin/Regine, Chapter 5. Discuss learning and learning organizations.

**Week 6 - 10/12/05**
Read Capra, Chapter 6 and Lewin/Regine, Chapter 6. What is corporate or organizational culture? **OCE #3 is due.**

**Week 7 - 10/19/05**
Read Capra, Chapter 7 and Lewin/Regine, Chapter 7. Explore the role of communication in organizations. Wheatley (*Leadership and the New Science*, 2nd ed., 1999) says that communication is information sharing; do you agree?

**Week 8 - 10/26/05**
Read Capra, Chapter 8 and Lewin/Regine, Chapter 8. What does an excellent communicator do? How do they operate in an organizational environment? “Primary dyadic relationships are important to overall job satisfaction” (*Fundamentals of Organizational Communication*, P. Shockley-Zalabak, 4th ed., p. 153). **OCE #4 is due.**

**Week 9 - 11/2/05**
Read Capra, Epilogue and Lewin/Regine, Chapters 9-10. How are intrapersonal communication issues handled at work? Should they be addressed in a work environment?

**Week 10 - 11/9/05**
Read Lewin/Regine, Chapters 11-12. How is morale a communication issue? How are extrinsic motivation factors (status, interpersonal relations, supervision, policies, working conditions, and salary) and intrinsic factors (achievement, recognition, challenging work, increased responsibility, and growth/development) communication
issues? Is motivation totally intrinsic? What causes us to be motivated at work? OCE #5 is due.

Week 11 - 11/16/05
Read Lewin/Regine, Chapters 14-15 (skip Chapter 13). Peter Drucker says (in Management Challenges for the 21st Century) that good employees can: listen, write, persuade others, demonstrate interpersonal skills, gather information, exhibit small-group problem-solving expertise, plan, judge [evaluate], collaborate, and analyze complex systems. Do you agree? Discuss this.

Week 12 - 11/23/05
Read Lewin/Regine, Chapters 16-18. How do the ideas from Lewin/Regine apply to GSU or do they? How do the ideas from Capra apply to GSU or do they? OCE #6 is due.

Week 13 - 11/30/05
Based on all the discussions and readings, how has your intrapersonal communication changed and how will that influence your work life? How could businesses be changed to recognize and work with these issues?

Week 14 - 12/7/05
How do the ideas of Lewin/Regine and Capra work together? How are they saying the same things and what are they saying that is different? OCE #7 is due.

Week 15 - 12/14/05
Summary of organizational communication—What things will each person take away to apply to his/her organization?

Evaluation:
PURPOSE OF THE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: There are no tests in this class. The papers are essays that are designed to have you synthesize the course reading materials, text(s), class discussions, your thoughts, life experiences and reflections around an assigned topic. I am your audience but so are you. Your role in these assignments is to teach yourself through your writing.

When you keep a journal you are your own audience, recording your insights and ideas. One of the best ways to do these assignments is to keep a journal with your reflections, thoughts, insights and ideas. These will be generated as you read the text(s) and course materials, consider the class discussions and think about your life experience (both in the past and in the moment as you write). The material in your journal will become the “fodder” for you to use to address the specific assignments.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION ESSAYS (OCE) of 4+ pages is due every other week. These essays are to reflect what you understand about the process of communication as well as what you are learning weekly from the texts and class
discussions, as the class progresses. How have you integrated ideas in the text into your thinking? Make reference to the texts and class discussions in your papers, as it seems appropriate. Perhaps you will identify some place that caused you to think about things in a new way or have greater appreciation for what you are contributing to others and the organization.

The process of communication cannot be considered without a self-reflection component; for at its source, communication is intrapersonal. These essays are also to reflect what you know and what you learned about yourself. With all these ideas in mind, consider the following questions (Note: question #1 is OCE#1, question #2 is OCE #2 etc.):

1. What are relationships like at work? What is your relationship with yourself like at work? What are your relationships like at work? Are they personally satisfying or not (or perhaps some of both) and what causes them to be that way? How is your relationship with yourself connected to the relationship with others? What causes your relationships (with self and others) to be the way they are? How do you see them at the foundation of your life work and the organization?

2. What are your mental models about:
   - Your work
   - You as an employee
   - Your relationships at work
   - Management with whom you work?
   How are your mental models in harmony with or out of sync with the material in the texts and class discussions and what difference does that make to you? What is the result of your mental models as witnessed in your life and work?

3. What do you think/feel about change? What different understanding of the world does one need to have to accept/embrace change and how does one achieve that? How is change connected with mental models? How is change connected with relationships? How is intrapersonal change related to interpersonal/"external" change?

4. What is your personal vision for your job, career, and life? Discuss how these are or are not connected/interwoven. How are your mental models connected with your vision? How is your vision connected with your motivation/morale at work? How does or doesn't your personal vision mesh/interact with the shared vision of those you work with and how does or doesn't all of the above interact the organizational vision?

5. Examine your use of dichotomous thinking in your work and personal environment (examples: success-failure, right-wrong, win-lose, good-bad).
   - When do you use it?
   - How do you use it?
   - How could it be a benefit or a hindrance?
   - How does it affect you intrapersonally?
   - How does it affect you at work?
   - How do you understand how the control model and dichotomous thinking are connected?
If you abandoned dichotomous thinking what kind of effect/results do you think it would have?

6 Listed below are several complex adaptive systems. How are they complex adaptive systems? What difference does it make to approach them as complex adaptive systems rather than linear entities?
- Your work and the work environment
- Intrapersonal communication
- Interpersonal communication
- Organizational communication

How do these systems work together as an even larger complex adaptive system?

7 Identify ten things that you can apply or have applied to your life/work life that you gained from the text, class discussions, and intrapersonal awareness. Explain how you will use or have used the things you have learned and the results anticipated or experienced.

All essays are worth 13 points except the last one, which is worth 12 points.

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE is expected and encouraged. This refers to regular class participation (speaking, discussing, listening, etc.) and attendance. More learning takes place the more students participate. Participation and attendance together are worth 10 points.

Additional Information: All papers are to be typed. The standard format is to double-space them with a minimum of 1-inch margins. They should have a title page. Running heads are not required, as shown in the APA manual, because those are for papers going to publication in a journal. Short papers (under ten pages) don’t require an abstract.

At times students have had difficulty with writing the assignments for this class. If this occurs, students will be asked to seek assistance through the Student Development Office at GSU. The ability to write well is an important component of effective communication. Understanding the content of the course is only half of what is required to pass the course. Because this is a communication class, it is expected that students can express themselves well in both oral and written form.

Assignments are due by the end of the class period in which they are to be turned in. After that they will be considered late. Late materials will lose a point per class session that they are late. At times an incomplete may be necessary. These will not be granted unless at least one half of the semester's work has been turned in and the incomplete request has been has been discussed with the instructor.

Grades are based on a point system totaling 100. The grades will be assessed as follows: 90-100 is an A, 80-89.9 is a B, 70-79.9 is a C, 60-69.9 is a D and below 60 is an F. To calculate your grade at any time in the semester, take the total number of points you have received to date and divide it by the number of points possible to date. The number you receive will correspond to a number on the above scale.
The accepted style manual for the Communications Programs at GSU is APA. There is information on this in the library, in the bookstore in a packet published by Student Development, and through the Student Development office on the Web. All written work must appropriately reference sources. Plagiarism will result in an automatic grade of F.

At times students have had difficulty with writing the assignments for this class. If this occurs, students will be asked to seek assistance through the Student Development Office at GSU (on line at: www.govst.edu/owl). The ability to write well is an important component of effective communication. Understanding the content of the course is only half of what is required to pass the course. Because this is a communication class, it is expected that students can express themselves well in both oral and written form.

It is the intention of the institution to support full participation of all students, regardless of physical ability level. Students, who have a disability or special needs and require accommodation in order to have equal access the classroom, must register with the designated staff member in the Division of Student Development. Please go to Room B1201 or call 708/534-4090 and ask for the Coordinator of Disability Services. Students will be required to provide documentation of any disability when an accommodation is requested.

All cellular phones must be turned off for the periods that class is in session.