

# coms 145

summer 2018  
intro to org comm

section 1, #50037, M/W, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m., MND 4000

## description

Introduction to Organizational Communication invites students to learn the theories, practices, and methods used to understand communication in and by organizations. In this course, we will explore how communication functions within organizations and between organizational members, as well as how communication structures organizations broadly. Throughout the class, we'll examine organizational structures, decision making, culture and subcultures, identity, power, leadership, relationships, conflict and emotionality, among other topics. Students will be asked to consider all of the various organizations with which they interact including current and previous employers, schools, churches, stores, and government agencies.

Catalogue description: "Basic concepts of interpersonal and inter-group communication within formal and informal social organizations. Current techniques of auditing and evaluating organizational communication. Prerequisite: COMS 100A."

## texts & materials

1. **Required:** Miller, K. (2015). *Organizational communication: Approaches and processes* (7th ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning. ISBN 978-1-4129-6315-2
2. **Required:** Other readings, as assigned. (Available free online or Canvas)
3. Recommended: American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington: APA.

## course objectives

1. To **know** the major theories and approaches for studying organizational communication
2. To **describe** the complex ways that communication structures and is structured by organizations
3. To **apply** communication concepts and theories to organizational contexts and issues
4. To **understand** the role(s) of organizational communication in today's society
5. To **develop and practice** communication skills that are valued in organizations

## feedback

Throughout the class you will have many opportunities to provide feedback about the course. I always welcome student input and realize if we wait until the end of the term during university evaluations, I cannot make changes that will help you. So, please share your suggestions and concerns with me in an open and constructive manner *during* the semester whether in class, privately during office hours, via e-mail or anonymously.



# coms 145 policies & requirements

## the process of teaching & learning in coms 145

Learning is an active process which means that you will be directly involved through discussion, activity and collaboration. Not only does it make the process more enjoyable (read: not boring), but your learning will be more effective, increasing your competence in the subject matter.

Effective learning happens when:

- ✦ you understand and can describe organizational communication in ways more sophisticated than when you began the course
- ✦ you are conscious of the communication choices made by organizations as well as communication choices you make as a member in various organizations
- ✦ you are able to identify and explain organizational communication phenomena

You will facilitate these outcomes by:

- ✦ mindfully completing reading and written assignments before coming to class
- ✦ arriving to class on time and prepared
- ✦ being prepared and willing to share ideas and dialogue with colleagues that are relevant to the class
- ✦ looking for connections between real life experiences and the ideas and concepts encountered throughout the course to build a deep, complex understanding of communication processes
- ✦ asking insightful questions

A typical class session will involve a great deal of student-to-student interaction. You will: talk about your ideas; develop, present and analyze arguments; write and share; develop conceptual maps; and identify concepts in various media. Occasionally, I will talk for 10-15 minutes, but we'll be focused on practice and application.

## classroom behavior & the class environment

Keeping the **golden rule** in mind, you should treat others as you wish to be treated. I intend to treat each student with respect, dignity and courtesy. I assume that your classmates and I will receive the same treatment from you. You are expected to arrive on time, fully prepared to actively engage in class discussion and activities, and to act in a professional, respectful manner. Active participation demonstrates your commitment to the learning process and enhances your understanding of the material.

Specifically, I want to build a classroom climate that is comfortable for all. It is especially important to:

- ✦ display respect for all members of the classroom – including the instructor and students
- ✦ pay attention to and participate in all class sessions and activities
- ✦ avoid unnecessary disruption during class time (e.g., talking out of turn, arriving late, surfing the internet, doing work for other classes, leaving class other than for an emergency, making/receiving calls, text messaging, etc.)
- ✦ avoid racist, sexist, homophobic or other negative language

Collaborative class norms:

See page 10.

# coms 145 policies & requirements

## late work/make-up exams

Unless specifically noted, all assignments are due at the BEGINNING of class time on the date assigned. **If you arrive late, your paper will not be accepted.** If you will be absent when an assignment is due, you may turn the assignment in early or send it to class with a colleague. (Make friends!) Early work may be submitted to the Comm Studies office (please get a time stamp). Note: Absolutely no assignments will be accepted via e-mail. **Ever. Ever, ever.** Late work will be accepted only in extreme circumstances (read: you are in a full body cast and cannot type) and will be marked down by one letter grade for each day late. Informal in-class activities/quizzes cannot be made up. Make-up exams will be considered only in extreme circumstances.

## attendance/punctuality

In order to have a meaningful class, everyone needs to arrive **on time** and prepared for the day's activities. Attendance will be taken and participation assessed via in-class activities. If you miss a class period where an assignment is due—for any reason—you assume responsibility for the zero that will be recorded. This includes papers, presentations, quizzes, exams and in-class activities. Excessive absences, tardiness, and early departure will result in a lower participation grade. Because each class period in a summer term is equivalent to an entire week of class, plan not to miss any sessions. However, you can make up one class session by completing an alternate assignment, IF arranged for in advance. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get lecture notes from your colleagues.

## add/drop policy

I follow the department/university policy on adding and dropping. Students may drop this course during the first two weeks of the semester without restriction or instructor approval. Students may add with instructor approval if room is available. Priority will be given to those who are graduating first. During the 3rd and 4th weeks of classes, petition forms are needed to add/drop, and require the instructor and department chair signature. Do not assume you will be automatically dropped for not attending class; however, failure to attend the first two days may lead to being dropped. It is your responsibility to make a commitment to drop or stay in class by the second week. Please follow the appropriate drop procedures or you may get a failing grade for the class.

## electronic devices

In order to create the best learning environment, electronic devices (e.g. ipads, laptops, cell phones, tablets) are not to be used in the classroom without specific direction from me. For those who buy e-books, you may use a tablet or laptop to view them for specific class activities.

**Specifically: Cell phones must be turned off and put away during class.** If you choose to use your cell phone during class, you choose to forfeit 50 points from your final grade, each time. If you need to use your phone for an emergency, no problem. Just step out.

The use of laptops—except for prescribed periods of time—is prohibited in order to facilitate engagement with discussion.

## a social media-free zone

Research\* indicates that we have but two primary channels for receiving and interpreting information: visual and aural. These channels become overloaded easily when faced with too much stimuli or information, e.g., trying to snapchat/text, “listen” to a lecture, take notes and pay attention to visual aids. Since meaningful learning involves actively engaging with content, limiting electronics in the classroom gives you an opportunity to involve yourself with the course material. Isn't that great? Don't worry, I promise to ignore my phone, too. Likewise, research says we learn more from hand writing notes, so no laptops!

# coms 145 policies & requirements

## academic honesty, plagiarism and cheating

The very best way to fail this course? Plagiarize or cheat. Academic misconduct will result in, at the very least, a zero on the assignment in question, and may include a failing course grade and/or possible university sanctions. Please be aware that plagiarism is the stealing of ideas which happens when you use someone else's material (including words, figures, images, structure, style, etc.) without giving the creator proper credit. Note that "recycling" papers from other classes also falls under academic misconduct and will not be tolerated. All work completed for COMS 145 must be original. Please acquaint yourselves with the university's academic integrity policy, which can be found here: <http://www.csus.edu/umannual/student/stu-0100.htm> To assist with student learning, honesty, and integrity in our academic processes, you may be asked to submit your essays to Turnitin which will enable you to check your paper for citations and plagiarism. Turnitin also allows me to compare your work with prior publications and papers.

## e-mail etiquette

Please remember that e-mail should be treated with the same care and respect that you would a face-to-face interaction. Compose e-mail carefully, using a pertinent subject line, an appropriate greeting and a concise message, without spelling or grammatical errors. I will attempt to return all e-mail promptly, within two business days. Messages received after 8 p.m. will not be addressed until the following day. Please note that I may not always respond to questions when the information is readily available in the syllabus, on Canvas or an assignment sheet.

## assignment formatting

All written assignments (except in-class or online activities) must be typed AND stapled or they will be not accepted. Seriously. No staple = no points. Proper grammar, correct spelling and articulate writing style are imperative. Assignments neglecting these elements will receive lower grades as a result. Specific formatting requirements for written assignments include: **one-inch margins**, double-spacing and 12-point Times New Roman or Garamond font. Please also include a single-spaced header for each assignment that includes your name, the date, the class and section number, and the assignment on the right-hand margin. APA style will be required for citations/references only.

Straight A. Student  
May 30, 2018  
COMS 145, Section 1  
Homework #1

## on figuring out "what she wants"

Every semester, I overhear students discussing "what she wants" on homework and papers, or "what she REALLY wants," as opposed to what's written on assignment sheets. Please know that I spend a significant amount of time developing assignment directions with purpose statements, learning goals, grading rubrics, etc. that spell out the basics of what I'd like to see you accomplish.

What I *really* want is for you to take that structure and then do your **best work**. Be creative. Think hard. Write drafts and re-write. Care about your work because putting in time and attention will help you think better and learn more overall. Worry less about "getting it right" because there are many ways to accomplish the same assignment and all of them may be just fine, if they also meet the minimum requirements (read: the assignment sheet). Be confident and have fun. I'm already looking forward to reading your ideas.

# coms 145 policies & requirements

## assignments & evaluations

Throughout the semester, you will have a number of opportunities to demonstrate your understanding of org comm concepts. Along the way, you can earn up to 1,000 points, which are distributed across the assignments listed below. Detailed criteria and requirements will accompany each assignment.

### **Engagement & Professionalism** .....150 points

Active and meaningful participation is critical for high quality learning environments. In a small discussion based seminar like ours, it's critical that everyone act professionally and contribute meaningfully in order to have the best learning experience possible. Therefore, you will be subjectively evaluated on your professionalism in and out of the classroom. Professionalism is demonstrated through clear preparation (reading in advance, bringing materials/books to class), effective verbal and non-verbal communication, staying on task, arriving on time, avoiding unnecessary disruptions, asking insightful questions, contributing appropriate comments based upon clear knowledge of class materials, coming to office hours, professional e-mail communication, etc. (For more detailed information, see "The Process of Teaching & Learning," and "Classroom Conduct & Behavior" on page 2.) Engagement will be assessed mid-term (50 points), and at the end of term (100 points). Excellent grades in this category are earned by those who consistently demonstrate respect, professionalism, and leadership in and out of the classroom. (Learning domains: Remembering, Understanding, Applying)

### **Genius Points** (Intro post x 15 points; 4 weekly posts x 40 points) .....175 points

You will have the opportunity to stun me with your brilliance by applying org comm theory to work experience and organizational phenomena via short weekly writing assignments on Canvas. (Learning domains: Application, Analysis & Evaluation)

### **Org Comm Connections Paper** .....125 points

In an effort to identify how organizational communication concepts show up in the popular imagination, you will accomplish a 3-page "org comm connections" paper where you will compare a popular news/magazine article that discusses an organizational communication topic with research regarding the same topic. (Learning domains: Application and Analysis)

### **Research Translation Paper** .....200 points

Academic research is often criticized for being inaccessible to lay audiences, in part because of paywalls that block access to the original work, and also the esoteric terms and dense language that often characterizes research. Exceptions exist in publications like the Harvard Business Review or Psychology Today, which break down research into easier-to-read language and "real world" applications. Your task will be to translate a piece of organizational communication scholarship into a short, catchy article aimed to teach a lay audience something useful about communication in organizations. (Learning domains: Analysis, Evaluation, Creation)

### **Exams** (Exam 1 & 2, 175 points each) .....350 points

The tests will cover material from the textbook, articles, and lecture, and may consist of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. A study guide will be provided. The tests can be collaborative in nature (Groups of 3 or fewer). You may, of course, take the exams alone. (Learning domains: Remembering, Understanding, Applying)

# coms 145 policies & requirements

## grading perspectives

Grades are part of the teaching and learning process. Keep in mind that you earn your grade based on how well your work meets class objectives, fulfills requirements and reflects the academic skills expected of college students. Grades are not assigned based upon effort. It is your responsibility to understand why you have achieved a certain grade and what steps can maintain or improve your grade (see "Grading Questions" below and "Grading Standards" on page 7).

## returned assignments

I will do my best to return regular assignments to you seven days after you turn them in. Exams and papers may take up to two weeks. Grades will be posted to Canvas. Please make sure the score on your homework matches the score recorded on Canvas. If it doesn't, you must bring me the hard copy with handwritten score. It is in your best interest to keep ALL assignments until the semester ends in case there is an error in the online grade book.

### grading scale

Final grades will not be rounded.

≥ 94% .....A	≥ 88% .....B+	≥ 78% .....C+	≥ 68% .....D+	< 60%.....F
≥ 90% .....A-	≥ 84% .....B	≥ 74% .....C	≥ 64% .....D	
	≥ 80% .....B-	≥ 70% .....C-	≥ 60% .....D-	

## grading questions

If you have questions about a grade or evaluation, I am more than happy to speak with you. You will never, ever, ever have a grade lowered because you raise concern or voice an inquiry about it. It is ALWAYS in your best interest to talk with me and ask how something was graded or what could be done to improve scores next time around (See "Grading Standards" for more information).

Please note, however, I will not discuss grades for an assignment on the day I hand it back to you, nor will I discuss individual grades in the classroom or by email. All such discussions will take place in my office at least one day after the grade has been received. This is to give you time to read the comments/evaluation. If you wish to contest a grade, write out your argument clearly, concisely and completely, and bring it with you to the meeting. **You have seven days to contest a grade from the time the assignment was handed back.**

\*\*\* If you are concerned about your achievement in the course, please speak to me early and often. There is not much I can do to help when the semester is over! \*\*\*

### an aside

As this is an upper division, senior seminar course, much of the discussion and activities will be centered around your questions, observations and contributions. As seasoned college students towards the end of your undergraduate education, it is expected that your work be polished and thought-provoking, and that you consistently engage with the material and assignments.

# coms 145 grading standards

## A: Outstanding – Original, appropriate criticism of course concepts

“A” work constitutes superior handling of the mechanical and conceptual material covered in class. Not only will “A” work synthesize and interact with the ideas and materials covered, but it will also show some originality of thought, an unusual degree of clarity in expression, and an ability to contextualize ideas, explore implications, and/or raise meaningful questions. “A” serves as a reward for superior presentation of extremely diligent consideration given to conceptually complex work. Such quality of work is achievable, but it is not common.

## B: Very Good – Thorough, appropriate synthesis of course concepts

“B” work is marked by a timely completion of the assignment, demonstrating not only a grasp of the material under consideration, but the ability to synthesize and interact with that material, rather than simply repeat it. “B” work goes beyond minimum requirements outlined in the assignment, but not in a disorganized or rambling manner. Not every attempt to go beyond the minimum requirements will succeed. The grade of “B” represents work that is above average, having succeeded by surpassing the standard requirements in the quality of the finished product.

## C: Adequate – Solid comprehension of course concepts

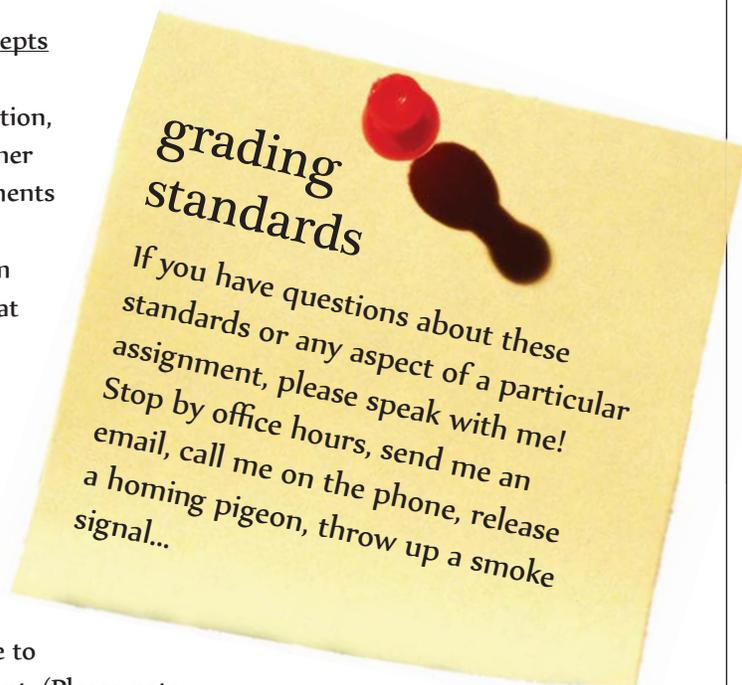
“C” work is marked by timely completion of the assignment, demonstrating a solid grasp of the material. “C” is the standard grade and all assignments are made with this in mind. Assume that fulfilling all aspects of the assignment well will result in a C. If you are looking for a grade higher than this, you will have to go beyond the minimum requirements outlined in the assignment. (Please note, that “going beyond” the minimum does NOT generally entail things like fancy cover sheets, colored fonts, or exceeding the assigned length of the assignment. “Going beyond” almost always applies to the conceptual concerns of the course, fine tuning clarity of expression, etc.)

## D: Poor – Lack of understanding/Assignment does not meet most requirements

“D” is given for work that meets the requirements established, but demonstrates serious flaws either in conceptual formation or mechanical limits. “D” work could be seen in, for example, a good idea expressed very poorly or, conversely, a well-written paper that actually says nothing. “D” work: requires major revision; strays from or confuses audience and purpose; lacks substantive development; is overly generalized or uses facts that have questionable credibility; is formatted or designed in a way that is confusing or misleading; demonstrates an inconsistent or sometimes muddled style; demonstrates unsatisfactory mastery of standard written English where required.

## F: Fails – Does Not Meet Assignment Requirements

“F” is given for an assignment that fails to meet the mechanical or conceptual requirements of university work. Mechanical requirements would be matters such as turn-in times, length of assignment, grammatical concerns, focus of assignment, etc. Conceptual matters would revolve around the comprehension of ideas and relationships between ideas. “F” work: fails to meet most of the stated assignment requirements; lacks focus on a subject or appropriate audience; includes unsatisfactory format; includes content that is weak, poorly developed, inadequate; lacks logical connections between ideas, sentences, paragraphs; lacks consistency in style and tone; demonstrates habitually poor writing skills where required.



# coms 145 resources

## violence, discrimination & sexual assault support services

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources via the Sac State Violence and Sexual Assault Services Program. More information: <https://shcssacstate.org/wellness-promotion/violence-sexual-assault-support-services>, Sac State Victim Advocate: 916-278-3799, Student Health and Counseling: 916-278-6461; Office of Student Conduct: 916-278-6060

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I hope you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. However, I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility regarding sexual misconduct. This means I will seek to keep information you share private to the greatest extent possible but I am specifically required to report sexual misconduct to the university. I can, however, help you find completely confidential resources such as Student Health and Counseling which can be reached at 916-278-6461.

## writing resources

It is expected that you write at a level appropriate for a graduating senior, with appropriate structure, clarity, grammar, and style. If you need help with writing, please visit the Writing Center in Calaveras Hall Room 128, just. Students may sign up for tutoring once per week and appointments must be scheduled in person. For more information, call 916-278-6356 or visit: <http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter/>

## unique academic needs/disabilities

If you have a disability or unique academic need and require assistance, please inform me as soon as possible so that I may accommodate you. You will need to provide disability documentation to the Office of Services to Students with Disabilities, Lassen Hall 1008. To learn more, please visit: <http://www.csus.edu/sswd/> or call 916-278-7239.

## academic support services

Various services are available on campus to support to your academic career, including counseling, tutoring and career advisement. For information, visit the Academic Support Services web site at: <http://www.csus.edu/studentresources/>.

## library databases

A multitude of periodical databases are available via the library web site to help you with your academic career and writing every single paper in this course. You will find "Communication & Mass Media Complete" especially helpful for any Communication Studies courses you take (especially this one!). Visit: <http://library.csus.edu/> to learn more.

## incompletes

Incompletes will only be considered due to an extreme personal situation. In that case, you must provide a compelling reason and substantive documentation. At that same time, you must also provide a concise plan and time-line for completing the course. I will then determine if your situation meets the requirements for an incomplete grade.

## Canvas/Canvas

Course announcements and assignments are distributed in large part via Canvas/Canvas. You are required to check this site frequently for e-mails, assignments and updates.

# coms145 tentative course calendar\*

wk	date	reading due/topic for class	assignment due at the START of class
1	M 5/28	Memorial Day	No class!
	W 5/30	Welcome/Introductions  Chapter 1: The challenge of Organizational Communication	GP#1 Due on Canvas by 9 a.m.
2	M 6/4	Chapter 2: Classical Approaches Chapter 3: Human Relations & Human Resources	GP#2 Due on Canvas by 9 a.m.
	W 6/6	Chapter 4: Systems & Cultural Approaches Chapter 5: Constitutive Approaches	
3	M 6/11	Chapter 6: Critical and Feminist Approaches Chapter 7: Socialization Processes  Exam Prep	GP#3 Due on Canvas by 9 a.m.  <b>Org Comm Connections Paper Due</b>
	W 6/13	<b>Exam 1</b> (Chapters 1-7 & related content)  Chapter 8: Decision-Making Processes	
4	M 6/18	Chapter 9: Conflict Management Processes Chapter 10: Organizational Change & Leadership	GP#4 Due on Canvas by 9 a.m.
	W 6/20	Chapter 11: Emotion in the Workplace Chapter 12: Organizational Diversity	
5	M 6/25	Chapter 13: Technological Processes Chapter 14: The Changing Landscape of Organizations	GP#5 Due on Canvas by 9 a.m.
	W 6/27	Exam Prep  Writing Workshop	<b>Research Translation Drafts Due</b> (Bring three hard copies!)
6	M 7/2	<b>Exam 2</b> (Chapters 8-14 & related content)  <b>Research Translation Presentations</b>	<b>Research Translation Paper Due</b>
	W 7/4	Happy Fourth of July! No class.	

# coms 145 collaborative class norms

## engagement norms/expectations

- ✦ Respect others' opinions and values
- ✦ Open mindedness--Be willing to be surprised
- ✦ Be open to other ideas
- ✦ Active Listening
- ✦ Don't talk when others are talking
- ✦ No ad hominem attacks--Focus on the topic, not the person
- ✦ Think before you speak
- ✦ Avoid unnecessary arguments
- ✦ Agree to disagree
- ✦ Don't take things personally
- ✦ Love people for who they are
- ✦ No side convos
- ✦ Respect personal space
- ✦ Be kind
- ✦ Don't get side tracked
- ✦ Express thoughts politely
- ✦ Accept rebuttals
- ✦ Avoid confusing subject matter
- ✦ Be straight forward
- ✦ Time management during discussions

## class structure norms/expectations

- ✦ Class activities
- ✦ Student interaction
- ✦ Discussion, asking questions
- ✦ Examples, stories, applications
- ✦ Debates
- ✦ Lectures, discussions, & activity mix
- ✦ Visual aids/videos
- ✦ Genuineness/Caring about students
- ✦ Group work
- ✦ Class work/Homework helps with projects
- ✦ Open note tests
- ✦ Study guide/test prep