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COMM 260.50: Communication in the Workplace

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COMM 260-50  Fall 2005
COMMUNICATION in the WORKPLACE

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Course Description

COMM 260 introduces students to the conceptual knowledge and practical skills needed for effective workplace communication. The course aims to equip students to engage in the variety of communication situations one can expect to encounter in the workplace. During the course, students will apply effective communication principles through observation and reflection, professional-writing and job-interviewing practice, analysis of case studies that deal with the contemporary diverse workplace, and collaboration with peers (mostly via the Internet) in tackling workplace-communication problems of the 21st century. By linking principles and practice, the virtual classroom and the real world, this online course aims to help students develop independent as well as collective workplace-communication competence in locations chosen by the learner.

Course Objectives

The course is designed to promote the following student-learning objectives:

- Understanding the elements of the communication process.
- Understanding the principles of effective interpersonal and intercultural communication in the workplace.
- Learning to attend to the nonverbal aspects of workplace communication.
- Improving your ability to write effective business memos, letters, executive summaries, and job-application letters.
- Learning to craft a resume that is guided by a clear purpose and is organized thoughtfully.
- Gaining experience in conducting and attending job interviews through role-playing a mock scenario.
- Learning from editing practice and offering constructive feedback to others.
- Engaging in fruitful observation of communication among people of diverse backgrounds and thoughtful reflection on your own professional communication performance.
- Achieving enhanced professionalism in workplace communication.
Required Materials

- One standard-size VHS tape, a zip disk, or a CD for recording your job-interview role-play.
- Access to a camcorder.
- A paper folder for submitting the portfolio of revised written work.
- Regular access to a computer, Microsoft Word, the Internet, and an email account

Orientation Meeting

A face-to-face meeting is scheduled for 6:10 – 7:30 p.m., Thursday, 1 September in LA Room 206. We will review the syllabus, explain course assignments, practice key functions that you need to use on completing your assignments on Blackboard, and find a peer editor/role-play partner for each of you.

Course Assignments

Quizzes

- Six quizzes (30 points each, for a total of 180 points).
- Quizzes are “available” on-line on the dates specified in your course schedule.
- Each quiz is available for a 48-hour window from 12 a.m. Thursday until 11:55 p.m. Friday.
- The quizzes are timed. Once you log in to the quiz, you will have 40 minutes to complete it.
- Quizzes consist of true-false and multiple-choice questions.

To contribute to online class discussions and produce high-quality writing assignments, students must remain current with the assigned readings. The six quizzes cover the 15 chapters in *Communication for the Workplace*. Although you will have access to your textbook, reading the material thoroughly prior to the quizzes is highly recommended.

Occasionally, a student's Internet provider or Blackboard will cause technological difficulties during a quiz. For example, you might be "kicked off" in the middle of a quiz or you might receive a message telling you that you cannot submit a quiz. This rarely happens. If it does, please contact the Central Help Desk (406.243.4357) or the instructor (406.721.4691) as soon as possible. If we know soon enough, we usually can fix the problem from the inside. Please do not worry. Such problems rarely occur.

Online Participation
- Six forums (40 points each, for a total of 240 points)
- In each forum, respond to two case studies (15 points each x 2 = 30 points) and comment on a classmate's response to a case that is different from yours (10 points). Detailed instruction is posted under “Discussion Board” on our course website.
- Discussions involve responding to one another’s questions, sharing experiences, commenting on reading materials, solving problems collectively, and providing feedback. The goal is to learn from one another.

The six forums are posted in the Discussion Board. You can find this link on the course homepage. Click on Communication first, then Discussion Board. We "talk" in a forum via "threaded discussion." A threaded discussion is an asynchronous "chat." This means you can write (or "post") responses to selected case studies and to the responses of others at any time. These forums are not "live chat rooms." You may log on whenever it is convenient for you.

Evaluation of your online participation is based on both quantity and quality. For quantity, you are required to provide responses to two of the case studies specified by the instructor for each forum. In addition, you are required to respond to at least one classmate's input (posted comments) concerning a case study other than the one you select. For quality, your responses need to (a) demonstrate understanding of the reading materials, (b) indicate thoughtful reflections concerning course content or classmates' experiences and insights, (c) stimulate further class discussion, and (d) reflect professionalism. Please use professional English and edit your writing before "submitting" your responses to the Discussion Board.

Optional "live" online chats may occur in the virtual classroom, the link to which is labeled Collaboration in the course homepage. Please let me know if you and a few other students would like to get together and "talk" with me or with one another. This feature can supplement the threaded discussions as needed. You are not required to participate in any live chats for this course.

**Writing Assignments**

- **Observation Paper (100 points)**
  Observe an interaction among participants of different cultural backgrounds for 45 minutes to an hour. Based on information gathered through your observation, compose a 2 to 3-page paper addressing questions regarding communication process, verbal and nonverbal communication, and intercultural communication. Be sure to read Chapters 1, 2, & 3 before conducting your observation.

- **Memo (25 points)**
  Apply the guidelines for effective memo writing in Chapter 5 to compose a business memo.

- **Letter (25 points)**
  Apply the guidelines for effective letter writing in Chapter 6 to compose a business letter.
Executive Summary (50 points)
Model after the examples in Chapter 10 to compose an effective executive summary for a mock formal business report.

Technical Writing Assignment (50 points)
Apply the guidelines for effective technical writing in Chapter 11 to write a description of an object or mechanism.

Application Letter and Resume (50 points)
Apply the guidelines for employment communication to compose a job-application letter and revise your current resume.

*Detailed writing-assignment guidelines are posted under “Assignments” on our course website.

Peer Editing
Over the semester, you will work in pairs to fulfill this course requirement. Both you and your assigned partner will serve as peer editors for each other. The responsibility of a peer editor is to provide your partner with constructive suggestions for revising writing assignments. Editing guidelines are posted under “Assignments” on our course website.
- You will earn 20 points for each writing assignment that you carefully and thoughtfully edit for your partner (a total of 120 points).
- By 9:00 p.m. on the Wednesday before each assignment is due, you need to e-mail a close-to-final draft of your writing assignment to your peer editor as an attached Word document.
- The editor should use the editing function in Word to edit the writing and provide constructive suggestions for improving the product.
- The editor is required to e-mail the edited version back to the writer by 9:00 p.m. on Thursday.
- The final draft is due by 9:00 p.m. on Friday. Please submit your finalized version, along with the edited version, to the instructor via the Digital Drop Box on our course website. Submission by e-mail is not acceptable.

Portfolio
Based on the instructor’s feedback, revise each of your writing assignments and save a hard copy of the revision along with a hard copy of the version on which the instructor commented in a paper folder. By the end of the semester, you will earn a maximum of 60 points for submitting a portfolio of six thoroughly and thoughtfully revised writing assignments. Grading criteria are posted under “Assignments” on our course website.

Job-interview Practice Recording
To apply the job-interviewing guidelines in Chapter 15, team up with a classmate and stage a mock interview in which one of you plays the part of the interviewer and one
plays the applicant for a specific (real or imaginary) job. Videotape the interview and discuss the interviewer’s and the applicant’s strengths and weaknesses after the playback. Submit a one-page joint reflection (20 points) along with the recording (80 points) to the instructor’s mailbox in the Department of Communication Studies at The University of Montana-Missoula. Detailed instruction and grading criteria are posted under “Assignments” on our course website.

Requirements and Grading

Your course grade will be determined by your performance on writing assignments, peer editing, quizzes, online participation, and a role-play:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Participation</td>
<td>240 points (6 forums x 40 each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>180 points (6 quizzes x 30 each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Assignments</td>
<td>300 points (6 assignments x 50 each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Editing</td>
<td>120 points (6 assignments x 20 each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>60 points (6 revisions x 10 each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-play Recording</td>
<td>100 points</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000 points possible</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Points/Final Grade</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>950 - 1000</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>900 - 949</td>
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<td>866 - 899</td>
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<td>833 - 865</td>
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<td>800 - 832</td>
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Grading Policies

- You are responsible for submitting your assignments **no later than 9:00 p.m.** of the due date. Late work receives 20% deduction from the points gained unless you provide a note from the doctor indicating that you were not able to complete the assignment because of sickness.
Missed quizzes cannot be made up unless you provide a note from the doctor indicating that you were not able to complete the assignment because of sickness. Be sure to check the calendar for quiz dates.

**Deadlines:** When managing your time to complete assignments, please be prepared that you may experience unpredictable technical difficulties. For example, your computer may freeze up or your Internet provider might not work properly at times. Technical problems are not acceptable excuses for late submission of assignments. You need to plan extra time to complete and submit assignments online in case of technical difficulties. In addition, you need to have a back-up plan for taking quizzes and submitting homework online. Is there another computer you can use? Is there another place you can get online?

**Discussion of Grades:** If you would like to discuss a grade you have earned, please either (1) call me at 406.721.4691 or (2) email me with your phone number and good times to reach you. I prefer to discuss student grades over the phone or in person.

**Submitting Assignments**

- Please deliver or mail your role-play recording and portfolio to my mailbox in the office of Department of Communication Studies.
- Please submit all written work as a Microsoft Word file ("filename.doc") via the Digital Drop Box on the course homepage.
- I will not accept submissions via my email address.
- To use the Digital Drop Box, click on Tools then Digital Drop Box on the course homepage. You must first click on "Add File" to keep your assignments accessible to you throughout the course and to maintain a record of your postings. This way we know you turned in your assignments on time.
- To actually SUBMIT your paper, you must then click on Send File and select the appropriate assignment to send.
- A common student error is to "Add the File", but not "Send" it. Please remember to do both in order to receive credit for your homework. I cannot access files that have only been added, but not sent. Your must title your files exactly as I name them, so I can clearly tell what you are sending. Also, please include your FULL NAME in the text of all submitted assignments.
Asking Question via E-mail

- When communicating with me via email, please be sure to sign your full name and mention the course title or number.
- If you have a question related to an assignment or the course, please entitle your email message "Question about _______." I will respond to "question" e-mails first to ensure that you can move ahead with your work.
- Please allow 24-48 hours (on average) for a response from me. Sometimes I will be able to respond more quickly. Other times, for example, during heavy grading times or if I am attending a conference, it may take me longer to respond. If your question is urgent, you may call me at 406.721.4691.

Calendar

- All forum dates, quiz dates, and due dates for all other homework are listed in the Course Calendar.
- You can access the Calendar by first clicking on Tools on the course homepage and then on Calendar. It is your responsibility to keep track of all the important dates. You may want to print out a hard copy of the calendar for easy reference.

Announcements

Announcements are available on the welcome page of our course website. I regularly post announcements regarding assignments, changes in rooms, new forums on the discussion board, problems with the websites, technological issues, suggestions, questions, etc. I highly recommend that you read the announcements frequently. After seven days, Blackboard removes current announcements from the opening page. However, you can read all announcements throughout the semester by clicking on "View Last 7 days," "View Last 30 days," or "View All."

Success in an Online Course

The following document provides some hints for completing an online course successfully. Taking online courses can be an effective way to learn, but it might take time to become accustomed to distance learning.
Checklist: How to Survive an Online Course

1. Register early.
2. Read as much of the course's textbook as possible before the class actually begins.
3. Log in to the course website several days before the class begins. That way, if you have any technical difficulties, you can work them out before the first week's assignments are due.
4. ATTEND the orientation meeting! Past experience reveals that students who miss the orientation spend a lot of time playing "catch up." This often leads to poor performance and/or dropping out of the course.
5. Set aside blocks of time daily and/or weekly to be "in class." Fix a schedule that includes blocks of time for reading assignments, completing homework, participating in class discussions, and taking quizzes and/or exams.
   a. One of the biggest mistakes online students make is to "just go to class" when they have a few minutes here and there. With too many distractions around (e.g., other students or family members in the same room) is another problem. You need to "go to class" in an environment that is conducive to studying.
   b. A good guideline for the amount of time you should spend per week is the number of credits you are taking. For a 3-credit class, you should spend 3 hours plus the amount of time you need for homework (at least another 3-6 hours).
6. Participate in class discussions!
   a. Don't do it just because you are being graded. Research shows that students who participate in class discussions learn more than those who do not.
   b. Post responses to my questions as well as reply to classmates' responses.
7. REGULARLY check the Announcements page and the Course Calendar. You can find the calendar by clicking on the Tools button on the homepage.
8. E-mail or call me when you need help!
9. Ask one or more students to be your study partner or form a study group.
10. Save your assignments in one easily accessible place on your computer, even after you have submitted them via the Internet. Always keep a copy.
11. Take responsibility for your own learning!
   a. Just like a face-to-face (f2f) class, you are expected to spend time completing homework, reflecting on course materials, and participating in class activities.
   b. Avoid making the mistake of treating this class as a correspondence course (where requires only reading and taking quizzes). In this online course, you must be "involved" as in f2f classes!
   c. The computer and I cannot be responsible for your success. Only you can!
12. Allow extra time for technological difficulties. Instructors rarely accept computer problems as excuses for late or missing assignments.
13. Understand you will experience some dissonance about this experience. Sometimes it will be fun, other times frustrating, and sometimes both. You will feel increasingly comfortable as you become more proficient as an online student!