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# COMM 295.50: Communication in the Workplace

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# COMM 295-50
# COMMUNICATION in the WORKPLACE
# Fall 2004

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## Required Materials

- Adler, Ronald B., and Elmhorst, Jeanne Marquardt (2005). *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Business and the Professions* (8th Ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill
- One standard size VHS tape
- Access to a camcorder (for two assignments)
- Regular access to a computer, Microsoft Word, the Internet, and an email account.
- Attendance to the **required orientation** on Tuesday, August 31 from 7-8:30 p.m. in LA 242.

## Course Description

COMM 295 introduces communication skills needed in business and professional contexts. The focus is on developing a working knowledge of theory and skills for interpersonal communication, group communication and public presentations. Concepts include language, nonverbal communication, culture, listening, interviewing, conflict management and researching, writing, and delivering presentations. Course objectives are met entirely via the Internet. You will read the text, visit websites, write papers, submit quizzes, participate in online discussions, and deliver/record two assignments--an employment interview and a speech.

## Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Define and explain basic communication terms and principles that underlie competent business and professional communication.
- Demonstrate knowledge of theory and competence in interviewing and résumé writing.
- Write and analyze informative and persuasive messages.
- Demonstrate and assess various conflict management styles.
- Prepare and deliver a presentation appropriate for the workplace.
- Select appropriate tools and resources in order to research various topics related to communication in the workplace.

# COURSE REQUIREMENTS

## Online Participation

You may be wondering how a communication course can be taught without regular face-to-face interaction with the other students or the instructor! Let me assure you that it is possible, and, while different than a traditional classroom, effective. We have class interaction online. We have insightful discussion, share examples, and learn together. Research shows that students learn more when they interact with not only the content of the course, but with each other and the instructor. As such, your involvement in the online discussions is required and graded (100 points).

The primary component of Online Participation involves the Discussion Board. Some weeks, not all, I will post 1-2 questions on the Discussion Board, which you'll find on the course homepage. We will carry on what is called a "threaded discussion." A threaded discussion is an asynchronous "chat." This means you can write ("post") responses to my question(s) and to the responses of others at any time. It is not a "live" chat (something with which you may already be familiar). This is one of the many benefits to taking this course online. You may participate "in class" when it is convenient for you, within some guidelines.

In terms of grading your online participation, I will be looking for the quantity AND quality of your responses. For quantity, you are required to provide a minimum of one response to all of my posted questions. Further, you are required to respond to at least two of your classmates' "posts," *per question.* For example, if I pose two separate questions in one forum, you need to reply once to each of my questions (two total responses). Additionally, you will need to respond at least twice to classmates for each question (four total responses). In summary, then, if the Discussion Forum contains two questions, you will need to "post" at least six responses. However, if I have posted only one question for the week, your minimum requirement would be a total of three responses (one to me, two to classmates). In some cases, it maybe appropriate to post more than the minimum number. For quality, I will be looking for responses that (a) demonstrate you have read the textbook, (b) reflect on content and/or classmates' responses and (c) stimulate further class discussion.

In addition, I may ask you to write me a few emails over the course of the semester--to introduce yourself, to assess your online participation grade and/or to offer your opinion about something in the course. Your replies will count toward your overall Online Participation grade.

Finally, "live" online chats may occur as needed. For example, you and a few other students may decide you'd like to get together and "talk" with me or with each other in the Virtual Classroom. This feature will also be provided when you are working on your group presentation. Your group will have its own discussion board and virtual classroom. This feature will be offered only as a supplement to the course; you will not be REQUIRED to participate in any live chats for this course.

## Quizzes

In order to have effective class discussions and productive in-class activities, students must remain current on the assigned readings. As such, you will take seven 20-point online quizzes that cover the reading material in the Adler/Elmhorst text. I will drop your lowest quiz score (in case you miss one, have technological difficulties or just earned a low score). Your six best quizzes will count toward your grade (120 points).

Quizzes, which consist of true-false and multiple-choice questions, will be available on the course website every Wednesday from Week 2 to Week 8. (See the course calendar for specific dates). They will be available during a 48-hour window-- from 12 a.m. Wednesday until 11:55 p.m. on each of the accompanying Thursdays.

The quizzes are timed. When you log in to the quiz, you will have 20 minutes to complete it. Although you will have access to your text while taking the quiz, reading the material thoroughly prior to the quiz is highly recommended.

## Career Research Interview Paper

Each student will identify, contact and interview someone who can help you in your career advancement. Before, during and after the interview, you will be asked to write about the process and include this information in a formal paper. Details for this assignment are available in a separate handout located in the Assignments section of the course website (100 points).

## Employment Interview

You will prepare for and participate in a mock employment interview. You will need to work with one other person (perhaps a classmate or a friend of yours) to complete the role-play. A detailed description of this assignment can be found in the Assignments link on the course homepage (100 points).

## Group Presentation

This assignment will give you the opportunity to focus on a specific and practical area of business and professional communication related to your vocational interests. Along with other members in your group, you will research your topic, put material "up" on the website (with my help, of course), and provide a list of additional websites for further information for your classmates. More specific instructions for this assignment are available in the Assignments link on the course website (80 points).

## Individual Presentation

Each student will prepare, deliver, and videotape a 7-8 minute extemporaneous presentation. You will have three choices for topics: 1) You may put together a professional portfolio; 2) You may inform us about a topic related to your vocational

interests; or 3) You may present a persuasive speech (argument) about a work-related topic, such as sexual harassment, the ethics of monitoring employee email/voicemail, etc. You will deliver this speech to an audience of at least eight people. Specific instructions for this assignment are available in the Assignments link in the course website (100 points).

# GRADING POLICIES

❖ Final grades will be based on the following scale:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 540 - 600 | = | A |
| 480 - 539 | = | B |
| 420 - 479 | = | C |
| 360 - 419 | = | D |
| Below 360 | = | F |

❖ You are responsible for turning your work in on time--no later than midnight of the due date. Late written work (hopefully, you won't have any of this, but just in case...) will be penalized 20% of the possible points. Late work will not be accepted after ONE WEEK beyond its due date.

❖ Missed quizzes <u>cannot</u> be made up. If you must miss a quiz, I will automatically "drop" that quiz as your lowest grade. Missing further quizzes will result in zeroes for such quizzes. Be sure to check the calendar for scheduled quizzes.
Remember: One of the perks of an online course is that as long as you have access to the Internet, you can take the quiz from anywhere!

❖ <u>Regarding Deadlines:</u> When managing your time to complete assignments, please anticipate that you may experience unpredictable circumstances--your computer could freeze up, your Internet provider might not be working properly, or any number of other possible technology problems could occur. These are not acceptable excuses for turning in late assignments. Always plan extra time to complete assignments in order to prevent submitting late work. Most importantly, always have a *back-up plan*--another computer to use, another place to get online and take a quiz, etc.

❖ <u>Regarding Discussion of Grades:</u> If at any point, you would like to discuss a grade you have earned (perhaps you don't understand why you earned a certain grade, or you don't agree with my assessment of your work, etc), please either (1) call my cell phone (459.3041) or (2) email me with your phone number and a good time to reach you, and I'll call you (so you won't have to incur a long-distance phone bill). Because of the enormous opportunity for misinterpretation and frustration when communicating via email, I prefer to discuss students' grades, or any other conflict, in person--at least on the phone, or arrange for a face-to-face meeting.

# SUBMITTING COURSEWORK

Please save all written work in a Microsoft Word file and submit to me via the Digital Drop Box on the course website. Do not submit your written work to me via my email address, unless I've specifically requested that you do so (like the introductory email).

In order to utilize the Digital Drop Box, click on Tools on the course homepage, then Digital Drop Box. You must complete two steps: First, you must click on "Add File" to keep your assignments accessible to you throughout the course and to maintain a record of your postings (so you and I know they were turned in on time, etc.). Second, 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; Do both to ensure you receive credit for your homework. Your files should be titled exactly as I name them when I give you the assignment, so it's clear to me what you are sending. Also, be sure that in the text of any assignment, you include your FULL NAME. I cannot give you credit for your assignment if you have not included your name.

I will return your written work, with in-text comments and a grade via an attachment to your email address. In order to do this in a timely manner, be sure that I have your current email address. When returning assignments, I aim for approximately one week after the due date of the assignment

# CORRESPONDENCE
# and
# ASKING QUESTIONS VIA EMAIL

First and foremost, when communicating with me via email, <u>be sure to sign your full name and the course you are in</u>. I am teaching three courses this semester, and many of you have email addresses that do not indicate your name. Signing your name and including the class you are in will help me respond most effectively and in a timely manner.

If you have a question related to an assignment or the course in general, please title your email "Questionabout_____." In the email be sure to tell me which assignment you are asking about and which course you are in. When responding to student emails, I will respond to "question" emails first--to ensure that you receive a prompt answer and may move ahead with your work.

Please allow 24-48 hours (on average) for an email response from me. Sometimes I will be able to respond more quickly. Other times during the semester, it may take me longer to respond--for example, during heavy grading times or if I am attending a conference.

# CALENDAR

The schedule of ALL assignments is available in the Course Calendar. Access the Calendar by first clicking on Tools on the course homepage, then on Calendar. You can view the Calendar in "daily," "weekly," or "monthly" formats. Because we do not meet like a traditional class, you are responsible for knowing when all of your assignments are due. You may want to print out each month's calendar so you can have hard copies of all the assignment deadlines.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements are available on the welcome page of our course website. I regularly post announcements regarding assignments, new forums on the discussion board, reminders for essays, problems with the websites and/or other technological issues, suggestions, questions, etc. I highly recommend that you read the announcements frequently. You can read the current week's announcements, as well as click on links that show the "last 7 days," the "last 30 days," or "view all" of previous announcements.

# HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN AN ONLINE COURSE

Please read the next two pages. The first is an Online Readiness Questionnaire, and the second is a Checklist for Surviving an Online Course. They will help you achieve success in this course.

# ONLINE READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Congratulations! You have signed up for an online course! Maybe it's your very first one, or perhaps you are an experienced online learner. Either way, the following questions are to help you assess your personal readiness for taking a course via the Internet.

## Technical skills

1. Do you have regular access to a computer and an email account?
2. Are you comfortable writing, sending, and receiving email messages?
3. Do you know how to send and open documents as attachments via email?
4. Can you create, save and manage files on your computer?
4. Are you able to navigate and research the Internet using a browser?
5. Do you know how to participate in an online "chat room?"
6. Can you download files?
7. Are you able to install software on your computer if you need to?
8. Do you feel knowledgeable in "netiquette?"

If you answered "no" to more than two of the technical questions, you may want to reconsider taking an online course. At the very least, you will need to learn some technology skills in addition to the course curriculum. More importantly, will you have the time to do this? The motivation?

## Study skills

1. Are you motivated to read, complete and submit assignments on your own?
2. Do you like reading and writing as primary (although not the only) channels for learning information--in contrast to spoken and visual channels?
3. Are you willing to set aside as much time in your schedule for completing your online coursework as you would for a "traditional" course?
4. Do you believe you have good overall time management skills?
5. Do you stay on task without direct supervision?
6. Are you able to work ahead, rather than procrastinate?

If you answered "yes" to the majority of the study skills questions, your learning style may be well suited to online learning. If, however, you answered no to more than two questions, you may find that online learning is frustrating and difficult for you. However, this assessment is only a guide, it does not determine absolutely whether or not you will be a successful online learner.

# 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 early and leave time to complete the first week's assignments.
4.  ATTEND the orientation! Past experience reveals that students who miss the orientation spend a lot of time playing "catch up." Often times, this 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." This includes time to read assignments, complete homework, participate in class discussions and take quizzes and/or exams.
    a.  One of the biggest mistakes online students make is just "going to class" when they have a few minutes here and there, or with too many distractions (such as other students or family members being in the same room, etc.). "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 (e.g. 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 do better 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.  Email 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, even after you've submitted them to be graded.
11. Take responsibility for your own learning!
    a.  Just like a face-to-face (f2f) class, you are expected to spend time out of class doing homework, asking pertinent questions, and participating in class activities.
    b.  Avoid making the mistake of treating this class as a correspondence course--just reading and taking quizzes. You must be "present" in online courses, just like in f2f classes!
    c.  The computer and I cannot be responsible for your success. Only you can!
12. Allow for extra time for technological difficulties. Instructors rarely accept these (or unfamiliarity with online instruction) 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. This will improve as you become more proficient as an online student!