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# COMM 421.01: Communications in Non-Profit Organizations

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## COMM 421 Communication in Nonprofit Organizations

Fall 2012

**Instructor:** Dr. Joel Iverson

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**E-mail:** [joel.iverson@umontana.edu](mailto:joel.iverson@umontana.edu) – that is where to reach me.

Office Hours – M,W 9-10 AM and by appointment.

### Course Description and Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to provide you with an overview of issues and topics in nonprofit organizational communication, at micro and macro levels. Our method of study will be a combination of reading, discussion, lecture, research, and analysis with a goal of coming to a broad understanding of the role of communication in the nonprofit sector. We will develop a broad understanding of the current opportunities and challenges in the nonprofit sector, central communication issues for nonprofit organizations as well as engage in the local nonprofit community. During the semester, you will engage in an interview with a nonprofit organizational leader, write a literature review on an important topic in nonprofit organizational communication, discuss and of course celebrate the knowledge we have gained in written form. You will also be required to complete two celebrations (written expressions of knowledge) and two shorter papers.

#### Course Learning Outcomes:

1. To introduce you to a range of topics involved in the study and practice of organizational communication in nonprofit organizations.
2. To facilitate your critical understanding of issues and politics involved in nonprofit organizational communication.
3. To develop your ability to analyze and significantly address nonprofit organizational problems.
4. To increase your ability to write analytical papers.
5. To foster an open mind so that we may fully comprehend the complex social constructs that influence nonprofit organizations and communication
6. To create a safe space for discussion and learning.

### Required Texts

That is old terminology for a pre-digital age. We will instead have required readings, but those will be distributed in electronic form. Hooray for Moodle!!

### Course Requirements

**Celebrations of Knowledge:** There will be two events similar to what you know as examinations over the, articles, podcasts, and discussions. Since this is a writing course, the format of the exams will consist of short answer/essay questions as well as a few matching or multiple guess questions. Celebrations will serve to review and allow you the opportunity to synthesize the material we cover as well as express your own thoughts beyond the discussion.

**Papers:** There will be two papers for this class. The first paper will be the result of your research about a nonprofit and an interview with a member of that nonprofit organization. Students will focus on questions generated from early readings in the course. The second paper will extend your work on the first. Multiple options exist for the second paper. I have included the general description in this syllabus as well. More details to come on each as is needed.

### Grading

**My Grading Philosophy:** An assignment that meets, but does not exceed the basic requirements will receive a grade somewhere in the “C” range. So, for example, if a written assignment requires you to answer a series of four (4) questions and you only answer three (3) questions, the MOST you can expect to receive on that assignment is 75%--regardless of how well you answered the other three questions. Assignments are developed to achieve a variety of academic and assessment goals and I have attempted to be very specific in the assignments about exactly what is required. So, if you have a question about the assignment—its content, format, etc., just ask. I welcome the opportunity to work with you on any of your projects. I will offer suggestions and review drafts. Please, if there is any doubt, do not hesitate to ask.

To earn an “A” on an assignment, you will need to be extremely proficient at explaining, applying, evaluating, and synthesizing the concepts, models, and theories covered in this class. An “A” goes to truly excellent work. I hope you will approach this grading philosophy as a challenge.

### **Basis of the Course Grade**

Celebration One	_____	5000 points
Paper One	_____	2500 points
Paper Two	_____	5000points
Celebration 2	_____	5000 points
Participation/Discussion	_____	2500 points
Total	_____	20,000 points

**Grading Scale:** Grades in this class will not be curved, and will be assigned on the following scale:

A	20,000 to 18,000
B	16,000 to 17,999
C	14,000 to 15,999
D	12,000 to 13,999
F	11,999 or less

Remember that grades are earned, not given. Grades do not define who you are, but do reflect on the outcome or product you turn in. I cannot evaluate effort, but effort does tend to result in a better outcome. I work to fairly evaluate the work on the criteria we set forth. If you feel I have made an error in evaluation, write down that objection to my evaluation of the content and then email me. I am happy to correct mistakes I have made. I do not change grades because someone wants or thinks they should get a different grade. I evaluate the outcome.

### **Policies**

1. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.
2. All students must be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at [www.umt.edu/SA/VP/SA/index.cfm/page/1321](http://www.umt.edu/SA/VP/SA/index.cfm/page/1321).
3. All celebrations of knowledge will be due on the assigned date
4. Papers will be typed and proofread and turned in on the date assigned.

**Respectful Environment:** You will be expected to act respectfully towards others in this class and assist in maintaining a civil and professional atmosphere for the class including discussions, email, and other exciting interactions. This includes respecting differing opinions, not using vulgar language, and creating a supportive environment.

### **Disability Statement**

If you have a disability for which accommodations are needed please contact me in the first week of the semester. We will discuss what accommodations you need and will receive in this course. Also, please contact:

Disability Services for Students (DSS)  
Lommasson Center 154  
The University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59812

(406) 243-2243 (Voice/Text)  
FAX 406-243-5330  
<http://life.umt.edu/dss/>

### **Tentative Schedule for Fall 2011 COMM 421**

<b>Aug 27</b> 29, 31	Introduction, Chapter 1 Sector and Comm	Reading 1, 2 & 2.1
3	Labor Day	
5,7	What CSOs and Org Comm	Lewis CSOs
10,12,14,17	Mission, Effectiveness, Strategy	3 Readings: Fairhurst et al.; Brown & Iverson; Herman and Renz
19,21	Work on Paper 1 – Organizational visit (no meeting as a class)	
24,26,28	Volunteers	Readings: Garner & Garner; Handbook Chapter; Small supplemental reading
<b>Oct 1</b>	<b>Celebration of Knowledge 1</b>	
3,5,8,10	Empowerment & Accountability Paper #1 Due Oct 8	Dempsey; Ashcraft & Kedrowicz; 1 other
12,15,17	Accountability and Stakeholders	2 readings TBA
19,22,24	Globalism	2 readings
26,29,31	Writing workshop	Small readings
Nov 2,5	Faith, Spirituality and Values	Considine; 1 other
12	Veteran's Day	
14,16,19	Framing, writing for nonprofits	Small reading
21, 26, 28	Technology (Thanksgiving is in there as the 21,23) enjoy	Iverson & Burkart; 1 other reading
30, Dec 2	Future of Technology	
3,5,7	<b>Celebration of Knowledge 2</b> <b>Paper Presentations</b>	
Final is Thursday, Dec 13th 8 AM – we will use this to do celebration or presentations.		