

COMM 260-50 Fall 2008

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 online discussions in tackling workplace-communication issues of the 21st century. By linking principles and practice, the virtual classroom and the real world, this online course aims to help students develop workplace-communication competence in locations chosen by the learners.

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.
- 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

- *Communication for the Workplace*, Tom Means, South-Western Thomson Learning, 2001. ISBN: 0-538-72322-x
- Regular access to a computer, Microsoft Word, reliable Internet connection, and a camcorder.
- Camcorders can be checked out from Technology Support Services located at Social Science Building Room 126 on the campus of The University of Montana-Missoula.
- A DVD disc or a VHS tape for recording your job-interview role-play.

Orientation Week

During the first week of the semester, you need to complete the orientation practice exercises posted on the Discussion Board of our course website. Click on “Discussion Board” and then on “Orientation Practice,” you will find (1) Cyber Café and (2) Scavenger Hunt. Complete the tasks included in these two online activities. They aim to help you become familiar with the course requirements and with one another. If you need help navigating within the course website, feel free to contact me by phone. Read the syllabus and course schedule carefully. The first online forum and the first quiz are scheduled for the second week of the semester. These assignments cover the first three chapters of the textbook. Start reading!!!

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 five-day window from 12 a.m. Wednesday until 11:55 p.m. Sunday.
- The quizzes are timed. Once you log on 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 call the ITCentral Help Desk or the instructor as soon as possible. If we know soon enough, we usually can fix the problem from the inside.

Online Participation

- Six forums (50 points each, for a total of 300 points)
- In each forum, respond to two case studies (20 points each x 2 = 40 points max.) and comment on a classmate's response to a case that is different from yours (10 points max.). 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. 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. To earn the maximum points for each forum, work on the quality of your postings. For *quality*, your responses need to (a) demonstrate understanding of the reading materials by citing materials from the textbook, (b) indicate thoughtful reflections concerning course content or classmates' experiences and insights, (c) stimulate further class discussion by asking questions, and (d) reflect professionalism by proof-reading your postings. Please use professional English and edit your writing before "submitting" your responses to the Discussion Board.

Writing Assignments

- **Observation Paper (120 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 (30 points)**
Apply the guidelines for effective memo writing in Chapter 5 to compose a business memo.
- **Letter (30 points)**
Apply the guidelines for effective letter writing in Chapter 6 to compose a business letter.
- **Executive Summary (60 points)**
Model after the examples in Chapter 10 to compose an effective executive summary for a mock formal business report.
- **Resume (60 points)**
Apply the guidelines for employment communication to compose an effective resume.

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

Portfolio

Based on the instructor’s feedback, revise each of your writing assignments. By the end of the semester, you will earn a maximum of 100 points for submitting a **hard-copy** portfolio of five thoroughly and thoughtfully revised writing assignments. Guidelines and grading criteria are posted under “Assignments” on our course website.

Important Reminder: Please save an electronic copy of all graded assignments consisting of instructor's comments. You will need to revise your assignments based on the instructor's suggestions for your portfolio.

Job-interview Practice Recording

To apply the job-interviewing guidelines in Chapter 15, stage a mock interview in which you will play the part of the interviewer or the applicant for a specific (real or imaginary) job. Detailed instruction and grading criteria are posted under “Assignments” on our course website. Step 1--Videotape the interview. Step 2--Submit a one-page reflection (40 points) via the link provided for the assignment on the “Assignments” page. Step 3--Send or drop off the DVD or VHS recording (80 points) to the instructor’s department mailbox in LA 301. With digital recording, you also have the option of submitting it via the Dropbox. Please contact ITCentral Help Desk or UMOOnline Support for advice regarding the downloading process.

Grading Policies

- You are responsible for submitting your assignments by the due date. Late work receives 50% 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.
- Online discussion 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 course schedule and announcements for discussion timelines.
- 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 or (2) email me with your phone number and good times to reach you. I prefer to discuss student grades over the phone.

- Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations in this online course. To request course modifications, please contact me as soon as possible. I will work with you and Disability Services in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at <http://www.umt.edu/dss/> or call 406.243.2243 (Voice/Text).
- You should be aware that as a student at the University of Montana, you must practice academic honesty and are bound by the following Code of Academic Conduct: <http://www.umt.edu/studentaffairs/sccAcademicConduct.htm>
As the code explains, academic misconduct includes plagiarism, cheating, and deliberate interference with the work of others. It is the intellectual equivalent of fraud—a crime against the codes of the academy. *As an academic crime, plagiarism merits academic punishment, ranging from an F on the assignment or for the course, to suspension or expulsion from the University.*

Requirements and Grading

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

<u>Online Participation</u>	300 points (6 forums x 50 each)
<u>Quizzes</u>	180 points (6 quizzes x 30 each)
<u>Writing Assignments</u>	300 points (5 assignments)
<u>Portfolio</u>	100 points (5 revisions x 20 each)
<u>Role-play Recording</u>	120 points
<u>TOTAL</u>	1000 points possible
Course Points/Final Grade	933 – 1000 A
	900 – 932 A-
	866 – 899 B+
	833 – 865 B
	800 – 832 B-
	766 – 799 C+
	733 – 765 C
	700 – 732 C-
	666 – 699 D+
	633 – 665 D
	600 – 632 D-
	< 600 F

Submitting Assignments

- Please submit all written work as a Microsoft Word file ("filename.doc") via the links provided on the "Assignments" page of our course website.
- Please submit your role-play recording to the instructor's department mailbox in LA 301 or via the Digital Dropbox of our course website.
- I will not accept submissions via my email address.

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 e-mail 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.

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. 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).
5. 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.
6. REGULARLY check the Announcements page.
7. E-mail or call me when you need help!
8. Ask one or more students to be your study partner or form a study group.
9. Save your assignments in one easily accessible place on your computer, even after you have submitted them via the Internet. Always keep a copy.
10. Take responsibility for your own learning!
 - a. Just like a face-to-face 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 face-to-face classes!
 - c. The computer and I cannot be responsible for your success. Only you can!
11. Allow extra time for technological difficulties. Instructors rarely accept computer problems as excuses for late or missing assignments.
12. 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!