

The Joseph M. Bryan School of Business and Economics
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
MBA 609 – Management Communications
Fall 2009

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Office hours: on Wednesday 4pm - 6pm and by appointment

This syllabus is subject to changes.

Check for inclement weather communication at www.uncg.edu/iss/weather.htm.

Course Description

The course premise is *effective communicators make strategic decisions*; therefore, we will practice intentional communication decision-making. This 1.5 credit hour course will focus on key topics in communication such as writing, speaking, relating and teaming for managers and leaders. We'll work to expand your knowledge-base by study and boost your behavioral performance through action. You have individual writing assignments, individual & team speaking experiences, and weekly discussion board conversations.

Critical in this course is preparation and group participation. You are expected to participate in class and in your teams as well.

This is a **performance-based class**. Your knowledge and skills improve through practice. The course is student experiential-based – you are to lead in class. My lecture time will focus on writing; your speaking time will expand depth in presenting, team dynamics and additional course content. You will have extended up-front time in this course.

"An audience remembers what you and your visuals look like more than they recall what you've said (Veech, 2002)." How you say it impacts! Therefore, in this class, you are graded on **what you say** (content) **and how you say it** (delivery). Excellence in grammar & mechanics is expected in all communications (emails, individual assignments & group assignments).

"The science of effective communication, comprises such foundation skills as writing and speaking effectively, adhering to organizational style guidelines, staying on point (i.e. maintaining the central idea of a message), and succinctly delivering consistent messages. These foundation skills, the science, help formulate our perceptions of a manager's personal integrity and credibility.

The art of effective communication, incorporate such advanced and sometimes intuitive skills as reading the audience, separating facts from emotions, varying persuasive strategies to match others' personal styles, and applying group facilitation methods to solved team problems and identify the root causes of business issues. These skills, the art, lead to our perceptions regarding the extent to which we trust a manager." *Annette Veech, Managerial Communication Strategies*

Course Objectives

At the end of the course, every student should be able to...

Writing

Craft audience-centered communications

"If you think a teacher is tough, try a boss." Bill Gates

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Write a concise well-organized persuasive Communication Strategy Memo
Write a clear concise letter, memo or email in response to a communication case issue
Knowledge to choose the direct & indirect writing strategies in certain situations
Increased skill in critical-thinking, problem-solving and articulation via case study

Speaking

Increased facilitation knowledge
Craft & deliver effective oral messages focusing on group facilitation

Relating & Teaming

Use nonverbal communication to enhance your written and oral messages
Practice team group decision-making
Practice communication strategies for effective team performance, such as team presence

Course Requirements

- Course Text: Writing That Works, Communicating Effectively on the Job, 9th Edition by Walter Olliu, Charles Brusaw, Gerald Alred. ISBN – 10:0-312-44844-9 ISBN-13:978-0-312-44844-8
- Course Text: download the ebook from the UNCG library at <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>. This text by Stunk & White, although written quite some time ago, is wonderful at teaching paragraphing. Please review this book for information to advance your writing.
- Recommended Text: Facilitating with Ease! Ingrid Bens. ISBN 0-7879-7729-2
- Attend every class. Contact the instructor immediately for extenuating circumstances. Remember, your teammates need you. Class will be affected by your absence.
- By registering for this course, you are agreeing to abide by the UNCG honor code. Read the code on the website at <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/>. Any violation will be pursued.
- Read the Faculty/Student Guidelines: http://www.uncg.edu/bae/faculty_student_guidelines_sp07.pdf.
- Blackboard proficiency

Classroom Behaviors

No late assignments are accepted; however, your lowest writing grade will be dropped.
No make-up presentations are given.

When you email me, use what you are being taught. I expect a well-crafted email. If you write poorly, I may respond with an email asking you to recompose your message.

Like your boss, I expect you to follow instructions. Business success is balancing following instructions to creativity and innovation.

You will receive feedback on your writing and speaking. View this feedback as a gift to grow in your skills instead of personal criticism. You will learn more if you do not let any feelings of resistance keep you from listening and applying the information.

I will use this numbering system for writing feedback.

Number	Item	Description
1	Wordiness	Using too many words to make your point
2	Flow - organization & transitioning	Needs to be easily readable
3	Tone off	Emotional tone is inappropriate
4	Awkward	
5	Paragraphing	Paragraphs too long, short, poorly organized
6	Punctuation	Missing or inappropriate use
7	Grammar/mechanics	

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8	Not 'pretty on the page'	Inappropriate formatting, white space, etc.
9	Vary sentence lengths	Sentences too long or too similar
10	Poor word choices	

My Values

I also value integrity. Integrity is the cornerstone to a life of good character and ethical business behavior; therefore, it is foundational in my classroom. Be honest and respectful.

I am a performance coach. I am optimistic and will hold you to excellence in performance. I believe in accountability. The coaching conversation is a frequent tool I use.

Course Assessments & Activities

Grading Standards:

A Business Writing Checklist document and a Speaking Checklist document are feedback & grading tools. These documents are posted in Blackboard.

A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, F

A = 100-94; A- = 93-90; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-84; B- = 83-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-74; F = 73 & below

Graded Activities:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Test/Reflection Discussion Board | 20% |
| 2. Weekly Writing Assignments: Strategy & Execution documents | 40% |
| 3. Speaking: Team Case Facilitation, Team HBR Facilitation | 20% |
| 4. Final: Concept Application/Letter of Transmittal | 20% |

Test/Reflection DB

Within 48 hours after class, you are to post your class learnings to the Test/Reflections Discussion Board. These are graded postings, so write a well-crafted organized message. Engage in conversation with the class post. The number of posts and the quality of your posts are both considered in the grading.

In each weekly DB, you are to

1. Create a new thread -do one lengthy posting that contains course content and your learning reflection thoughts for the week's material.
2. Post two responses to your classmates main posts. "I agree." or "Great point." do not count as a quality post.

Average quality of 3 postings is a C+ grade.

Case Writing Assignments

As business professionals, we continuously make decisions on what needs to be said and how it is delivered - success depends on it. And most often, we don't know all we want to know about the situation. The best cases convey the ambiguity present in real-life business situations.

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Submit your works according to the stated procedures. **Be sure** to write your name and section number on the paper – in the right upper corner.

You are to hand-in your submissions in hard copy at the beginning of class. And secondly, you are to post your work to your private Blog - one that only you and I share. This blog will be used as back up and perhaps for electronic grading. Do not email me your assignments unless we have had conversation and agreed to this medium.

Strategy Memo & Execution Document

You have two documents to produce for the case writing assignments: a strategy memo & an execution memo.

1. The Strategy Memo: Use the defined format as defined on the last page of this document. Organization & depth of analysis are key factors. The message is to be in great flow. Link the relationships of the problems to the stakeholders to the strategy to the solutions & actions.
 2. Execution Document: You are to create a written work of application - could be a letter, a memo, a speech, etc. that demonstrates your strategic intention of the case communication issue.
- All hard-copy submissions are to have a completed Business Writing Checklist coversheet **stapled** to the back. Write comments to me as warranted.
 - I give feedback. Learn to welcome the information. Take the feedback as a gift and improve. Grades 'A' & 'F' get less feedback – you know the intention and you achieved it or you need to see me. Grades 'B' & 'C' get the most feedback. I do not bring attention to every single 'error.' You are to inspect your paper for recurrences of the same mention. See me quickly if you have a question – with just a few weeks of class, we don't have time for inactivity.
 - You will be assigned to a team(s). You are encouraged to discuss strategy and be each other's editor. Collaboration is business behavior. However, I caution you – each individual write is to be an individual write.
 - The top writing assignments will be chosen from class and posted as models. This sharing of information gives you an opportunity to learn from one another.
 - Once papers are returned, you are responsible to monitor your Blackboard grades. See me within a week for any points of discussion.

Speaking Activities

- Impromptu Speaking Activity
- Team Case Facilitation
- Team HBR article Facilitation

Final Concept Application Paper

You are to write a 2+ page single-spaced memo (to me) on a concept in the course: conflict management, team or meeting communication, business writing, nonverbal communication, speaking, etc. This is to be an in-depth application using course information – how will you

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apply this information to your business life? Use business writing techniques. **You are to have 50% content, 50% application.** You are to have at least 4 cites that detail additional information. Be sure to cite the HBR articles used in class.

This is NOT a content regurgitation - it's a combination of course content with reflection and application.

Letter of Transmittal (5%)

Report (2+ pages and a Works Cited page) (15%)

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Communication Strategy Memo

To:
cc:
From:
Date:
Subject: Communication Strategy & Actions for Case xxxxx

The purpose of this memo is to inform you on my recommended communication strategy for Case xxxx. In just a few words, detail what problem you are solving. You may form in a question if you like.

Background

Explain the circumstances that lead up to the problem. This is the smallest of the 4 sections. This section is case situation information. State your assumptions & premises.

Strategy Exploration

Discuss possible solutions to the communication dilemma. Do not choose your solution now. It is likely there is an abundance of possibilities for a directional communication decision. You must be clear on what you are solving. Jumping too quickly into solution could cause major leadership problems. **Offer three possible solutions.**

Here are some important mentions in exploration of the communications problem. You are invited to present this information in a table.

- Who are the stakeholders (internal & external –primary, secondary & tertiary)
- Who is the audience? What is their attitude towards the message – favorable or not?
- Audience's relationship to the communicator.
- What is the impact of the problem on each audience group?
- What message needs to be communicated to each group? Is it the same message?
- What is the best delivery method? (letter, memo, email, presentation, conference call, web seminar, voicemail, speech, meeting, series of meetings, etc.)
- What is the best time to deliver the message?
- Use a direct or indirect approach?
- Are there any important relationships to mention?
- What are the emotions involved of the differing audiences?

Solution with Action Definition(s)

In a concise sentence or small paragraph, detail the decision/solution approach – your communication strategy approach.

Detail your recommendations/action items. Be sure to offer a solution to each primary problem & address the stakeholder issues. Don't leave loose ends.