

**PUBA/COM 623: ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION**  
**Fall 2006 Syllabus**

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Office: Saunders 409

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-5 pm; appointments at other times are welcome given schedule feasibility.

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email: [jady@hawaii.edu](mailto:jady@hawaii.edu)    **Meeting Place:** Kuykendall 306    **Meeting Time:** Tuesdays 6-8:30 PM

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**COURSE OVERVIEW**

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This course is a seminar in which we will engage in graduate-level discussion of both core-literature concepts and contemporary problems in organizational communication. We will emphasize the mission of understanding and optimizing communication in the workplace. Our approach will be that of guided discussion, activities, focused instruction. Everyone will assume significant roles in our group's discussions and activities. We will use assigned readings and discussions thereof, structured experiences, group processing, and media presentations to facilitate learning.

By the end of the course participants should understand what contributes to healthier communication in organized endeavors, be challenged to improve themselves as communicators in the workplace, and recount their progress as communicators and specialists in organizational communication.

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**REQUIRED MATERIALS**

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1. Harris, T. Applied Organizational Communication. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Hilldale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. This volume provides the *what...*the *why...*and the *how* of communication in organizations.
2. Readings posted for the course website on MyUH.

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**ATTENDANCE**

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I expect regular attendance. "Roll" will be taken, and repeated absences will inevitably hurt your performance in this class. You may miss up to three class sessions without penalty. Thereafter thirty points per absence will be deducted from your course point total. "Medical" excuses or other incidental excuses for absences will counted toward the three you may use. Special emergencies and catastrophes requiring extended absence from class will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis in a manner that is fair for everyone in the course. But you must let me know about those circumstances as soon as you can. Missing six or more class sessions will result in your automatically failing the course.

Come to class in a timely manner. Coming in late may disrupt class and annoy both your professor and your classmates. Roll will be taken as class begins. Five points will be deducted from your course point total for every time you are fifteen minutes late. To avoid this problem please notify me asap of traffic and other reasons for being delayed by

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**CONSULTATION**

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Make appointments and visit—or email me—for comments, help and answers to your questions. I will almost always be available during my posted office hours if I'm not meeting or in the PUBA office. If I'm not in Saunders 409 check with the PUBA office in 632.

The best way to establish initial contact for consultation is email; you should briefly state the nature of your question and suggest times during which you can meet. While I may not be able to see you right away [though often I can], the important thing is getting your request to me.

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## A WORD ABOUT CONSENT

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Your continued enrollment in this class beyond the first meeting will be taken as an indication that you fully understand and agree to the course governance terms set forth in this course description and syllabus. Study this document carefully. If you discover something that will become a problem for your particular situation as a student (i.e., special needs or challenges that you face), you should notify me immediately. Saying “it's not fair” will not get you out of a possible bad grade situation. If you find something with which you cannot live, drop the class now. Otherwise I will do my utmost to help you succeed in this course.

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## GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

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### WEEKLY JOURNALS

You will be required to keep a journal of your thoughts and learning regarding communication in the workplace on a weekly basis. Your journal entries should detail what you have learned and considered—and how you have changed as a result. I will expect you to go well beyond statements such as “this is what I learned this week...” and into reflection of “how my understanding” and “practice” will change. Does your learning help you understand past events? Do you notice personal patterns and ways of thought and response that you are learning must be changed? How does what you've learned both comfort and challenge you?

Your weekly journal entries [copies of which you will submit to me at the start of each session] should be at least three pages in length [double-spaced, word-processed] if they are to reflect adequate thought and reflection.

I do not guarantee a response to, or evaluation of, each journal entry you submit. This is particularly true of commenting on your writing per se. While hearing each week from me may be desirable, I'm not sure of my ability to keep that commitment regularly. We will be discussing your entries in small teams during most of our sessions; this approach will have its own unique advantages, more so as we advance through the term.

This assignment is worth a possible 50 points.

### INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS

Your ability to examine particular facet of an organization's communication system and share your understanding in practical ways with others is very important. I will therefore be giving you opportunities to exercise your observational, analytic, and communicative skills throughout the term—in dyads or triads. Investigative Reports require you to look closely at practical applications from the standpoint of a concept, theory or principle we've discussed in class. I may assign specific foci within these Report tasks: Answering a question, writing a case study, or describing an organization where you may work are examples of how we might approach these Reports.

This assignment is worth a possible 50 points.

### CLASS PARTICIPATION

Participation in this course will mean that you are almost always with us, actively engaging in our conversations, and completing ad hoc assignments on time.

This course's success depends on your conscientious participation in our discussions. Your participation affects everyone else in the course. I therefore expect full and competent participation in our discourse on organizational communication. This means that I will expect you to complete our course readings/assignments before the class sessions in which we discuss them; come to our sessions with something to say that is both meaningful to you and relevant to the rest of the group; and listen actively to others, joining our conversation. Coming to class unprepared, and answering the assigned questions directly from our text, is not sufficient.

Language proficiency is not important to me, so if English is not your first language do not let that impede your attempts to participate. One of my best-participating students of all time spoke EBL [English as a Broken

Language—like my Japanese ability!] but that didn't matter. The key is that she wasn't afraid to express her opinions. Fluency was no obstacle for her and it usually should not be.

Cultural tendencies of some students may make our style of class discussion uncomfortable. If you are from a "collectivist" culture where students just take notes and opinions are not stated directly—especially in front of professors—you must learn to adapt to our local, somewhat individualist academic culture. On the other hand, listening, fostering a balanced discussion, and allowing others time to express their views may be a challenge for a strongly "individualist" learning culture. I am looking for our group to assume a posture that avoids these albeit stereotypical extremes. I will hold all students equally accountable for participation, though I will allow some "warm-up time" for students for whom this kind of discourse may not "natural." Our style in this class is that you should talk as freely with me and with your classmates as you would with others in your life whom you trust and respect.

My objective is not to look for reasons to assign low grades after the term ends...I will make every effort to be fair to you. After all, I want you to succeed in this course. Nevertheless I will use this scale when evaluating your participation in our discussions:

- 100 points: Your participation in all class discussions demonstrated unusual focus and mastery of the reading materials for each class session. Your participation was a remarkable asset to our processing of ideas and concepts offered in PUBA/COM 623.
- 90 points: You participated in almost every class discussion; your participation was constructive and demonstrated thorough familiarity with the reading and conceptual materials for each class session.
- 80 points: You participated in many class discussions; your participation was usually constructive [though sometimes irrelevant]; you demonstrated some familiarity with the reading materials for each class session.

[below the 80-point level the curve drops quickly!]

- 60 points: You participated in class discussions about half the time. Your participation was about evenly divided between being constructive along the lines of our discussions and being less than relevant. Your participation did not demonstrate familiarity with the reading materials for each class session.
- 40 points: You participated only occasionally in class discussions; your contributions were infrequent, not relevant or not informed by reading materials to the extent that you did not contribute meaningfully to our discourse on PUBA/COM 623 material generally over the term. You will be given a grade of "C" for PUBA/COM 623 if your participation is of this most unsatisfactory nature.

This grading rubric assumes that you do participate in class and that you do read the materials for each session. The keys to successful participation are simple:

1. Actively read; take time with the reading; think about what you are reading. Perhaps this means outlining the chapter for each session. At minimum you should answer any questions, or complete any assignment, I provide to you the prior week.
2. **Think of this course's material as eminently relevant** to you. Even if you are not currently employed, you have been or will be. Most students in this class will find the material relevant to their lives five or six days each week!
3. Come to class with questions and opinions of your own regarding the material. If you disagree with something our authors have written [I do at times], don't be afraid to express that disagreement. If you don't understand something, don't be afraid to admit it! We'll gladly help...remember, we're here to learn!
4. Join our conversation as an interested and helpful partner. If you disagree with what someone says in class, respectfully give us your view. If you agree with what someone says, say so! Perhaps you can elaborate, offer an example from your experience, or rephrase the opinion in a way that is most meaningful to you.
5. Don't just sit in class and look at your watch. You're using up other people's oxygen, too, so make it worth it.
6. Come to class with the attitude of enjoying the material, learning things that you will find eminently useful for the rest of your life, and—above all—enjoying the fine people who will be in class with you.

There are a total of 100 points possible for class participation.

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## COURSE GRADE

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Your course grade will be assigned at the end of the semester. Your course grade is based on simple point totals—you will not be competing against others in the class. You will get out of the course what you put into it. "Plus-Minus" grading may be employed to reflect higher or lower levels of performance within letter grade ranges or to account for minor "intangibles" such as the quality of work, attitude, and closer evaluation of contributions. In any event your grade will be explained to you in writing at semester's end.

200-180 points='A' range.

179-160 points='B' range.

159-140 points='C' range.

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## COURSE SCHEDULE

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**Never finalized;** Subject to change upon circumstantial necessity. If you've taken a course from me before ...you know what that means.

Week	Topic	Comments
<b>1</b>	Introduction and Orientation	
8/22	Preliminary Assignments: Journals	
<b>2</b>	Definitions; Harris Chapter 1: General OrgComm matters	
8/29	Journal Reviews [JRs]; Comm Models; Activities; Debriefing	
<b>3</b>	Harris Chapter 2: Perception	
9/5	Investigative Reports: Comm Models	
<b>4</b>	Harris Chapter 3: Overview of MGT & OrgTheory	
9/12	[JRs];	
<b>5</b>	Harris Chapter 4: Verbal Communication	
9/19	[JRs]; Investigative Reports: MGT & Org Theory	
<b>6</b>	Harris Chapter 5: Nonverbal Communication	
9/26	[JRs];	
<b>7</b>	Harris Chapter 6: Networks and Channels	
10/3	[JRs];	
<b>8</b>	Harris Chapter 8: Listening and Feedback	
10/10	[JRs]; Investigative Reports: Networks & Channels	
<b>9</b>	Harris Chapter 9: IPC	
10/17	[JRs];	
<b>10</b>	Harris Chapter 10: SGC	
10/24	[JRs]; Investigative Reports;	
<b>11</b>	Leadership Contexts [material by Ady]	
10/31	Read Harris 11 for alternative perspective & background.	
<b>12</b>	HOLIDAY: ELECTION DAY	
11/7	Vote already...if you're registered!	
<b>13</b>	Harris Chapter 13: Motivation	
11/14	[JRs]; Investigative Reports: Applying Maxwell's 17 Laws	
<b>14</b>	Harris Chapter 12 + Beyond: Roles and Effects of Technologies	
11/21	[JRs];	
<b>15</b>	<b>Buffer: TBA</b>	
11/28		
<b>16</b>	Wrap-Up and Party	
12/5	[JRs]; Debrief discussion;	

**Course meetings should follow this general pattern:**

Journal Reviews in groups; Investigative Reports [when scheduled]; Presentations and/or structured experiences; Debriefing & Wrap-up.