
COMS 361

Business and Professional Communication

Fall 2011
MWF 10:00-10:50 am

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Overview

Development of communication skills used in governmental, corporate, and nonprofit agencies. Emphasis on report generation, information interviewing, and the presentation of proposals. Because a significant portion of the course grade is based on student team projects, this course cannot be taken pass/fail. PRQ: COMS 100 (or its equivalent)

Goals

COMS 361 will focus on the knowledge you already have and will get you to apply it in real-world settings. This course stresses both writing and performance skills. Because this course relies on real-world application, we will be working on projects that you will be able to demonstrate to future employers your ability to work with concepts that you are learning in other courses.

There will be two main projects that you will be working on this semester. The first project will be a job-interviewing unit where you will go through the process of finding and researching a prospective job and writing a cover letter and résumé for it. The second unit will require you, as a part of a team, to find a client that you will construct an actual product (e.g., marketing plan, proposal, web site, etc.) that will solve a problem for that particular organization. You also will be completing small writing assignments as a way of working with different writing styles that we will be examining through the semester. The emphasis in this course is the combination of **both** written and spoken competencies, which is what you would be doing working for an organization.

Because this course does not teach fundamental speaking skills, you must have the prerequisite of COMS 100 met before you take this course.

By the end of the semester, you should be able to successfully demonstrate the following:

1. Explain the constructs of appropriate business communication in organization settings through various assignments and examinations.
2. Demonstrate dyadic communication through the employment interview.
3. Demonstrate public communication through the proposal

Policies

I view this class as a laboratory or as some students will call it as work boot camp. You will be put into simulations where you will need to perform as if you were looking to be hired by a company and then do the types of tasks that an employee may be asked to do. I want you to be successful in the class and will do what I can to help you be so.

If a company employs you, you would expect to complete tasks on time. If you are turning in something late, please tell me beforehand. If there is an extenuating circumstance, I will do what I can to help you, but I reserve the right to deduct a 10% penalty for each 24 hours until I receive your assignment.

Dress is a nonverbal cue that helps to build credibility with some people. Many corporations have dress codes on what is considered to be professional dress. On performance days (etiquette dinner, interview, and final project), you will want to be dressed professionally. . From collegefashion.net, “[Professional dress] . . . is the most conservative type of business wear. It’s what you’ll be expected to wear in the office if you work in accounting, finance, or other conservative industries (or if you just have a really conservative boss!) For women, this means a business suit or pants suit, or dress and jacket. For men, professional dress means a business suit or a blazer, dress pants and a tie.” If

- presentation.
4. Apply concepts of clear writing.
 5. Demonstrate the effective use of technology appropriate for an organizational setting through the various projects during the semester.

Requirements

You will complete the following projects this semester:

1. Finding a job—you will research the job market, find a job that you can qualify for based on your degree, do research on the company, and write a company research report, resume, and cover letter for that company. You will do an interview using Perfect Interview and will visit the instructor for a consultation on the interview materials and interview.
2. Short writing assignments—you will write four business emails that focus on realistic workplace situations and different audiences, both internal and external.
3. Proposal and deliverable for an organization—you will, as a group, recruit an organization and will produce a deliverable along with documentation that summarizes the research completed in designing the deliverable. The proposal/deliverable is pitched to the client during the final exam period.

Evaluation

Etiquette Dinner Presentation	20
Company Research	50*
Cover Letter	50*
Resume	50*
Interview	100
Electronic Media Message	10
Routine/Positive Message	10
Negative Message	10
Persuasive Message	10
Purpose Statement	20*
Research Strategy	20*
Survey/Interview	20*
Progress Report I	25
Progress Report II	25
Client Letter I	20
Client Letter II	20
Final Project	170
Proposal Presentation	100
Individual Evaluation	50
Group Evaluation	50
Client Evaluation	50
Weekly Quizzes	120

*Assignment can be redone.

you are looking for clothes that will help you get through the class, go to Goodwill on Annie Glidden Road. Finally, consider closely the amount of jewelry and accessories (e.g., earrings) you have on for presentations—they should be kept to a minimum. Points are allocated on how well you meet this dress code.

As more and more corporations move towards using teams, you also will be in teams a lot during this course. You will be in teams to complete various class activities and eventually move into your final project. You will be assessed points at the end of the semester on how well you work in this team based environment.

Plagiarism whether you do it in a testing, speaking, or writing situation, while it is something that I don't enjoy handling, but will be investigated when suspected. Instances of plagiarism will be referred to the Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct where you can receive a zero on the assignment or an F in the course depending on the severity of the situation.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

A student who believes that reasonable accommodations with respect to course work or other academic requirements may be appropriate in consideration of a disability must (1) provide the required verification of the disability to the Center for Access-Ability Resources, (2) meet with the Center for Access-Ability Resources to determine appropriate accommodations, and (3) inform the faculty in charge of the academic activity of the need for accommodation. Students are encouraged to inform the faculty of their requests for accommodations as early as possible in the semester, but must make the requests in a timely enough manner for accommodations to be appropriately considered and reviewed by the university. If contacted by the faculty member, the

Grades will be based on the total number of points earned at the end of the semester:

1000-900=	A
899-800 =	B
799-700 =	C
699-600 =	D
599-0 =	F

staff of the Center for Access-Ability Resources will provide advice about accommodations that may be indicated in the particular case. Students who make requests for reasonable accommodations are expected to follow the policies and procedures of the Center for Access-Ability Resources in this process, including but not limited to the Student Handbook.

A wide range of services can be obtained by students with disabilities, including housing, transportation, adaptation of printed materials, and advocacy with faculty and staff. Students with disabilities who need such services or want more information should contact the [Center for Access-Ability Resources](#) at 815-753-1303.

Materials

Thill, J. V., & Bovee, C. L. (2011). Excellence in business communication. (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice-Hall. ISBN: 9780136103844

Here are some prices I found on August 15, 2011

Amazon \$91.26
Barnes and Noble: \$88.66
NIU Bookstore: \$101.40

You may be able to find the book that is not loose leaf at a cheaper price if you look around. Just make sure that it is the 9th edition as it is a major edition change from previous editions. I found it on Barnes and Nobel and Amazon from \$94. You can even rent it from Chegg for \$56.49.

Milestones

August 22

Chapters 1 and 2

Orientation to class

Getting ready for business 2.0

Achieving success in today's competitive business environment

August 24

Using technology to improve business

communication
Making ethical choices
Making your meetings more
productive

August 26

Improving listening skills
Improving your nonverbal
communication skills

Quiz 1 due by midnight on August 29

August 29

Chapters 3 and 15

Understanding the opportunities and
challenges of communication in a
diverse world

Enhancing your sensitivity to culture
and diversity

August 31

Improving intercultural
communication skills

September 2

Securing employment in today's job
market

Quiz 2 due by midnight on

September 6

September 7

Chapter 16

Preparing resumes

September 9

Writing application letters and other
employment messages

Quiz 3 due by midnight on

September 12

September 12

Chapter 4

Understand the interviewing process

Preparing for a job interview

September 14

Interviewing for success

September 16

Analyzing the situation

Quiz 4 due by midnight on September 19

September 19

Interview materials due

Chapter 5

Gathering information
Selecting the right medium

September 21

Organizing your information

September 23

Adapting to your audience

Quiz 5 due by midnight on September 26

September 26

Chapter 6 and Appendix A

Composing your message

September 28

Using technology to compose and shape your messages

September 30

Revising your message

Quiz 6 due by midnight on October 3

October 3

Chapter 7

Producing your message

Proofreading your message

October 5

Distributing your message

Choosing electronic media for brief messages

October 7

Creating content for social media

Creating effective email messages

Quiz 7 due by midnight on October 10

October 10

Chapter 8

Creating effective instant messages and text messages

Creating effective business blogs

October 12

Creating effective podcasts

Using the three-step writing process for routine and positive messages

October 14

Making routine requests

Sending routine replies and positive messages

Quiz 8 due by midnight on October 17

October 17

Chapters 9 and 10

Using the three-step writing process for negative messages

Developing negative messages

October 19

Exploring common examples of negative messages

October 21

Using the three-step writing process for persuasive messages

Quiz 9 due by midnight on October 24

October 24

Chapter 11

Developing persuasive business messages

October 26

Developing marketing and sales messages

October 28

Applying the three-step writing process to reports and proposals

Quiz 10 due by midnight on October 31

October 31

Short writing assignment due

Chapter 12

Supporting your messages with reliable information

Planning informational reports

November 2

Planning analytical reports

Planning proposals

November 4

Composing reports and proposals

Quiz 11 due by midnight on November 7

November 7

Chapters 13 and 14

Illustrating your reports with effective visuals

Producing and integrating visuals

November 9

Producing reports and proposals

Proofreading reports and proposals

November 11

Distributing reports and proposals

Planning your presentation

Quiz 12 due by midnight on November 14

November 14-December 2

Work days and group meetings

December 5

Final Presentation 10-11:50 am

