

Most recently taught Fall 2007

Comm 4974 Senior Project Syllabus, Fall 2007

Purpose: This course is an experiment for the capstone course. The capstone course is supposed to culminate the departmental course work by applying some of the content learned in various courses to a practical setting. Rather than just repeating previously learned material, a fair amount of new material will be presented in this course. The goal of this experimental course is to assist students in making the transition from student to full-time employment. As a result, we will be studying the socialization/assimilation process. To assist in accomplishing the multiple goals of the course, students will also work in groups with a community client to gain an understanding of why individuals join, continue in, and leave a community organization, in this case a community choir, the Columbia Chorale. As such, a mixture of talents indicative of the entire program will be needed in each group as they research, write, and produce the necessary report and then present it to the client.

Course Objectives: Students will be able to:

- 1) Explain the socialization processes of joining, maintaining membership, and leaving an organization.
- 2) Conduct interviews and surveys to gain understanding of the experiences of organizational members.
- 3) Work in groups to collect, analyze, and report their findings to members of the organization.
- 4) Apply concepts learned to their future work and volunteer careers in organizations.

Prerequisites:

The student must be a senior already accepted as a communication major, preferably in the final semester of college. The student must have completed at least 100 hours of undergraduate work and 24 hours of the major before enrolling in the course.

Course Readings:

There is no text book. Required readings will be available through the Blackboard website. Students will locate some readings on their own.

Evaluation:

The grade for the class will include five main components described in more detail below:

Class Participation	125
Short Papers (6)	240
Client Member Interviews	125
Final Group Report and Presentation	250
Mid Term & Final Exam (130 each)	260

Grading Scale:

	A=930-1000	A-=910-929
B+=890-909	B=840-889	B-=820-839
C+=800-819	C=750-799	C-=730-749
D+=710-729	D=660-709	D-=640-659

Class Participation (125 points)

Students are expected to be in attendance and come prepared having completed the necessary readings and homework assignments including individual and group assignments. There may be occasional in-class writing assignments or quizzes. If you miss a class, you will be unable to make up the points for that day. Participation includes active involvement in discussions and class or group activities. You are allowed 5 personal/sick days (excused or unexcused absences) before your grade is affected. Lack of consistent attendance and participation can result in the loss of up to 100 points. Documented cases of problems will be considered.

Short Papers (240 points—40 points each)

Students will write 6 short papers, 1-2 pages double spaced in length, on various topics throughout the semester. These papers are described in the following pages. The due dates are on the course schedule. Late papers will not be accepted.

Client Member Interviews (125 points)

As part of working with the client, each group will conduct three sets of interviews. The first set of interviews will be with new members of the choir to determine their background, why they joined, and so forth. The second set of interviews will be with members who have been with the choir for more than two years to determine why they originally joined and why they continue to participate. The third set of interviews (hopefully) will be with former members of the choir to determine why they joined and why they left the choir. For each set of interviews groups will conduct from 2-5 interviews (exact number to be determined as we go). If all goes well, each group member will conduct 2-3 interviews as part of the project. Each group will be responsible for turning in “transcripts” of their interviews on the assigned due dates.

Group Report and Presentation Proposal (250 points) (partial description)

You will be divided into 4-5 groups for the semester. We will be working with the Columbia Chorale, a community choir, under the direction of Alex Innecco throughout the semester. The primary goal of the organization is to provide opportunities for community members to participate in presenting or listening to choral music. This fall’s schedule includes Handel’s Messiah. See <http://www.columbiachorale.com/> for a more complete description.

The goal of the group project is to gain an understanding of why people join, continue in, and leave the Columbia Chorale. Each group will conduct interviews, analyze surveys results, and create a report to present to the director to assist him in understanding the dynamics of members of the organization.

Near the end of the semester, each group will present its report to the director using an extemporaneous delivery style. This may occur outside of class time. The presentation must be divided fairly equally among all members of the group. You will receive feedback from the director and the professor concerning the quality of the report and its presentation. Timing of the presentation is an important component in the grade of the presentation. The presentations should be 10 minutes in length (this may change), not including a question and answer period.

Group Grade Procedures for Group Proposal and Presentation:

At the end of the semester, each group member will assess the degree to which the group members contributed equally to the overall project. When the results of this indicate differential contributions, group members may not all receive the same grade for the report and presentation. To assist me in assessing this, groups should submit a signature page for any meetings held outside of class time to validate attendance.

Grading Exception: Individuals who read their portion of the presentation (rather than speaking extemporaneously) will receive a full grade reduction from the group grade.

Examinations (260 points)

There will be a midterm and final examination over the course materials (130 points each). This will include information from the readings and additional information covered in class and perhaps, information related to the client. The exams will be primarily short answer or essay questions. The questions will ask you not only to recall information, but also to apply the information to situations or illustrate the concepts through examples.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:

Students are expected to exhibit high standards of integrity in the course. Students who fail to adequately give credit to other sources for ideas are guilty of plagiarism. Students who present other people's work as their own or who knowingly allow others to do so are guilty of academic dishonesty. Such behaviors can result in failure of the course and dismissal from the university.

American Disabilities Act:

The Department of Communication will make special arrangement to address any special needs addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please contact the instructor or the Department ADA Coordinator if you have any concerns.

Tentative Course and Assignment Schedule Fall 2007:

1. Mon. Aug 20 Introduction to Class
 2. Wed. Aug 22 Overview of the Socialization Process (Temporary Group Activity)
 3. Fri. Aug 24 Meaning of Work (**SP1 Due**)
 4. Mon. Aug 27 Occupational Socialization (Sources)
 5. Wed. Aug 29 Occupational Socialization (Stereotypes) (Temporary Group Activity)
 6. Fri. Aug 31 Anticipatory Organizational Socialization
 - Monday, September 3, Labor Day, No Class--
 7. Wed. Sept 5 Recruitment Reports (**SP2 Due**)
 8. Fri. Sept 7 Recruitment Reports (Temporary Group Activity)
 9. Mon. Sept 10 Resume and Interviewing (Select final groups)
 10. Wed. Sept 12 Interviewing (**SP3 Due**)
 11. Fri. Sept 14 Anticipatory Socialization for Volunteer Organizations
 12. Mon. Sept 17 *Volunteer Organizations: Design Interviews for Newcomers*
 13. Wed. Sept 19 Realistic Job Previews (Group Activity)
 14. Fri. Sept 21 Organizational Encounter (**SP4 Due**)
 15. Mon. Sept 24 Organizational Encounter
 16. Wed. Sept 26 Organizational Culture (**Read Microsoft Case A&B**) (next exam)
 17. Fri. Sept 28 Culture for Nonprofit Organizations (**Read Church Case**)
 18. Mon. Oct 1 Graduate School Applications and Columbia Chorale Discussion
 19. Wed. Oct 3 **Midterm Examination**
 20. Fri. Oct 5 *Interviews of Newcomers Due: In Class Discussions*
 21. Mon. Oct 8 *Volunteer Organizations: Design Interviews for Established Members*
 22. Wed. Oct 10 Management & Emotion Management as Culture
 23. Fri. Oct 12 Technology as Culture
 24. Mon. Oct 15 Work Family as Culture (**Read Paternity Leave Case**)
 25. Wed. Oct 17 Organizational Culture Reports (**SP5 Due**)
 26. Fri. Oct 19 Organizational Culture Reports Continued
 27. Mon. Oct 22 *Interviews of Established Member Due: In Class Discussions*
 28. Wed. Oct 24 *Design Survey & Work on Final Project*
 29. Fri. Oct 26 *Finalize Survey Design & Work on Final Project*
 30. Mon. Oct 29 Voluntary Exit
 31. Wed. Oct 31 *Volunteer Organizations: Design Interviews for Former Members*
 32. Fri. Nov 2 Culture in Nonprofit Organizations & Columbia Chorale
 33. Mon. Nov 5 Individual Transitions: Promotions, etc. (**Read Hospital Case Study**)
 34. Wed. Nov 7 *Survey Results Discussion*
 35. Fri. Nov 9 Org Transitions: Mergers, Life Cycles (**Read Culture Splinters Study**)
 36. Mon. Nov 12 *Interviews of Former Member Due: In Class Discussions*
 37. Wed. Nov 14 Group Work
 38. Fri. Nov 16 CAAP
 - November 17-25 Thanksgiving Break--
 39. Mon. Nov 26 Involuntary Exit (**SP6 Due**)
 40. Wed. Nov 28 Group Work
 41. Fri. Nov 30 *Presentations to Client—Time and Place To Be Announced*
 42. Mon. Dec 3 Short Term Financial Matters for Graduates
 43. Wed. Dec 5 Long Term Financial Matters for Graduates
 44. Fri. Dec 7 Course Evaluations and Review
- Final Exam** Tuesday Dec 11 8:00 to 10:00 A.M.

SP1: Work and Job Interviews: Due Friday, August 24

For this writing assignment you need to interview four working adults who are not college students. These can be family, friends, coworkers, supervisors, professors, or strangers. Each interview should take about 10 minutes. These can be conducted in person or via the phone. Ask each person at least these questions:

1. How did you get to be in your current job/occupation?
2. What do you get out of your work?
3. What does it mean to you to work?
4. Are you a volunteer for any organization? Why or why not?
5. What, if anything, makes something “a real job” versus “not a real job”?

Be sure to ask follow up questions and clarifying questions like these, especially when they give brief answers: What do you mean by you get. . .(satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment, etc.)? Do you have anything else to add to that? So, it sounds like you think . . .?

Take notes while you interview the people so that you don't forget what they say.

Write a 1-2 page summary and evaluation/analysis of what you found out, but bring your notes from the interviews to class for additional contribution to the discussion.

SP2: Recruitment Materials Report Due Wednesday, September 5

Find recruitment materials for some specific organization, perhaps one you would like to work for in the future. This can be printed materials or a website or both. (FYI: It is quite easy to find this information online for many organizations, including large businesses like Procter and Gamble or volunteer organizations like the American Red Cross.) Examine and read the materials. There may be no end to what you can read online about a company, so be thorough, but not exhaustive.

Write a 1-2 page report that includes a summary of what you learned about the company and how it recruits employees. Then analyze and evaluate the information. Consider what are some of the overall messages about the organization. You might consider questions like these: What are the messages about employees? Who do they seem to want (and not want)? Do they perpetuate or debunk any occupational stereotypes in their materials? Be prepared to talk about the organization in class for 4 minutes and answer questions.

SP3: Interviewing Abstract Due Wednesday, September 12

Select a book or visit a fairly thorough website that gives advice on job interviewing. Then read a significant amount of the available information. Again, be thorough, but don't be exhaustive since it may be quite extensive.

Write a 1-2 page paper that summarizes some of the main points or types of advice given. Then analyze and evaluate the information. You might consider questions like these: Is it useful? Is it different than what you've heard? Does it seem to be from a credible source?

SP4: First Week Interview Due Friday, September 21

Find someone with a strong memory of his/her first week(s) on the job. This should be someone who has only been in the job for a short period of time (maybe the first month or first six months). Ask him/her about his/her experiences. Here are some possible questions:

1. What was your first week or two on the job like?
2. What type of training did you receive for your job from the company?
3. What was the biggest positive surprise (if any) during the first weeks on the job?
4. What was the biggest negative disappointment (if any) during the first weeks on the job?
5. What type of communication did you have with your supervisor during the first weeks on the job?
6. What type of communication did you have with other coworkers during the first weeks on the job?
7. Have you changed anything about your job since you've started? If so, what? How did you go about changing it?
8. Did the interview process give you a realistic picture of this job? Why or why not?
9. Was there anything that you know now that you would have liked to have known as you started the job?
10. If you were going to design an orientation or training program to help a new employee in this company, what would you do?

Again, be willing to ask follow up questions and probe the person's responses. Feel free to ask the questions in a different order or add some additional questions. Try to get a real sense of the experience of the first few weeks.

Write a summary of the interview, hitting just the highlights, not the answer to every question. Then analyze what you have. What does it tell us about this newcomer's experience in that organization? What does it tell us about newcomers in general in organizations?

SP5: Organizational Culture Report Due Friday, October 19

Choose an organization other than the one you did for your recruitment study (SP2). Examine any materials you can find about the organization. This could include a website, an annual report (which might be on line), and recruitment materials. In addition try to find at least one newspaper or magazine article about the company (You might try using "Factiva"—a business database available through Ellis library.) As you explore the company, consider the culture of the organization in general (values, beliefs, way of doing things, etc.) and any possible ways this is communicated (artifacts, rituals, stories). Beyond that attempt to discover what type of management theory seems to be operating as part of the company culture (it probably won't be explicitly stated), how technology is or is not being used in the company, what type of work/family policies they seems to have, or any evidence of emotion management. You may not be able to find something on all of these topics and certainly may need to draw conclusions through inference from what is said rather than clear statements about the topics.

In your 1-2 page report, describe the culture of the organization as thoroughly as you can. Then evaluate it as a place to work in or in relationship to the concepts we have been discussing this unit. Be prepared to make an oral report of about the company (4 minutes or so).

SP6: Dismissal Abstract or Interview Due Monday, November 26

You have two options for this assignment.

Option 1: You can read an article or book chapter(s) on dismissing employees. This might be advice on how to do this or it might be a study of people who have been dismissed or anything close to that.

Your paper would be a summary/abstract of the reading. Then you would write your analysis of that information.

Option 2: You may know someone who either has been dismissed recently or who has had to dismiss an employee recently. You would interview them with questions like these:

Someone dismissed:

Tell me about how you got dismissed.
When did you first think this might happen?
How did the supervisor communicate your dismissal to you?
Did you feel like the dismissal was fair? Why or why not?
What would you do differently?
What advice might you have for others in your situation?

Someone dismissing an employee:

Why did you dismiss the employee?
What process did you use to dismiss the employee?
Did you create any records or documents as part of dismissing the employee?
How did you tell the employee about the dismissal?
How did the employee react?
How did other employees react when they heard about it?
What would you do differently?
What advice might you have for others in your situation?

Your paper would be a summary of the interview and an analysis of the information you gained.