PROPOSAL FOR AN UPPER DIVISION CLUSTER COURSE

Name of faculty member: Leslie T. Good

Title of proposed course: Sp 423 Organizational Communication

When will the course be offered: Spring 2000
Name of Cluster/Cluster coordinator: Leadership for Change / Vasti Torres, Susan Hopp, Amy Spring

Please address the following items in your narrative, keying your text to the corresponding item below:

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION (100 words or less).
   Application of communication theory to the study of human interaction within the organizational context. Examination of the relationships between structural variables in the organization and informal communication channels, including analysis of leadership style, decision making, conflict management, and computer mediated communication. Course requirements include completion and report of a personal research project.

B. COURSE DEVELOPMENT. Please indicate whether the course is based on an existing course (and if so, please specify), or is a new course in development. If the course is a revision of an existing course, please explain what form the revision will take (this may be addressed under item C.). Please be aware that the new General Education requirement is based on different premise from the former distribution requirement, and therefore the academic role of upper division courses in General Education will necessarily be different from the previous role.

   The course is an existing course. See attached syllabus

C. GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS. Please describe how your pedagogical goals for the course promote the University’s goals of General Education.

   Cooperative group learning; student-centered classroom activities; critical thinking and analysis of organizational life; collaborative hands-on and written assignments. (See attached syllabus)

D. COURSE OUTLINE. Please provide a detailed outline of the proposed course. This need not be a completed syllabus, but should include an outline of topics, a preliminary reading list and the name(s) of instructor(s) committed to teaching the course during its first year.

   See attached syllabus.
Syllabus

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION
SP 423
Winter 1999

2:00-3:50 Tues., Thurs.
NH 59
CRN 44125; 4 credits

Dr. Leslie T. Good
Office: NH 34
Phone: 725-3608; 725-3531 (main office)
Hours: 1:00-2:00 Tues. & Thurs.; or by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

This course is intended to provide an overview of theories, issues, and problems of communication in a variety of organizational settings. Social life is necessarily an organized life, and communication both shapes and is shaped by ways of organizing. As such, the underlying theme of this course will be the role communication plays in helping to create and sustain organized social relations. Since one of the primary roles that communication plays in shaping organizational life is the popular representation of that life, we will focus part of our discussion on mediated images of organizational experience.

The primary emphasis of this course is analysis and criticism. Our focus will be communication theory and its usefulness in helping us to understand organizational life. During the first part of the course, we will explore the diversity of approaches to organizational communication to get a sense of both the emergent debates and the range of resources available to us as analysts. To help us organize the fundamental issues, we will identify three primary foci of organizational-communication inquiry—(1) symbolic resources, (2) material resources, and (3) means and practices—and discuss their importance to organizational culture, decision-making, and power. The latter part of the course will be presentational in format (see below).

Required Texts:


Format:

The format of the course is lecture, discussion, and presentation. Readings are intend to supplement lectures, not duplicate them. Interrogate the readings, and come prepared to critique them (please read all assigned materials before we meet each week). I will provide you with focal discussion questions for intensive small-group analysis of the readings. Toward the end of the term, your work (i.e., presentations) will become our common "text" for class discussion. Your regular and timely attendance is expected, and is mandatory at all presentations.

Though I will not, as a rule, collect these materials, you are expected to come prepared to each week's meetings with:

1. a written discussion outline (see handout), which includes questions to pose in small-group discussion settings;

2. a popular-culture "case study" of "organizational reality" for discussion, which you have located in popular/lay literature (e.g., a newspaper article, editorial, "My Turn" column in Newsweek, etc.) or on television (write a brief synopsis in this case). We will not have an opportunity to discuss all of these, but be prepared to do so for any given meeting.

Evaluation:

Your grade will be based on a team research project/report, as part of a coordinated class project, and a group presentation of a television case analysis. The approximate final-grade breakdown is given below. I say this is "approximate" because I will also consider such positive variables as consistent improvement in course performance, outstanding performance in one or more areas, etc.

<table>
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<th>% points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research project/report (completed in stages for feedback)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group presentation (w/ supporting materials) of television case analysis</td>
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<td>Class Participation</td>
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The general interpretation of letter grades is:

A = excellent (has exceeded the minimum requirements for the course and work borders on perfection)
B = superior (has exceeded the minimum requirements for the course, but work could still use some improvement in minor areas)
C = average (has satisfied the minimum requirements for the course)
D = inferior (has failed to meet the minimum requirements for the course, but work nonetheless shows thought and effort)
F = failure (has failed to meet the minimum requirements for the course)

Policies:

1. I do not accept late assignments without compelling reasons for doing so. In the event of an unforeseeable crisis, provide documentation and attempt to contact me in advance, if at all possible. Other minor problems (e.g., computer crash, broken typewriter, etc.) that happen to all of us should be anticipated when you schedule your work. If you know that you are having such a problem before an assignment is due, let me know so that we can resolve the problem beforehand.

2. If you need to consult with me, please make every attempt to do so during my regularly-scheduled office hours. I am also happy to make a separate appointment with you. If you come by my office on a "drop-in" basis at other times, I will most likely be too busy to see you. During my office hours or an appointment, you will receive my undivided attention. If you phone me during my hours and I do not answer, that means that I am in consultation with another student. Just try again shortly or leave a message for me to return your call.

3. I encourage collaboration among students. In fact, collaboration is a strong element of the course structure/format. Outside of class, I fully approve of your studying together and discussing written assignments. As a group, you represent a wealth of diverse resources, and I encourage you to share those resources. But I do require that you acknowledge any advice or constructive criticism given by another student for a written assignment (do so on your title page). Also, if there is anything that I can do to facilitate your collaboration (such as scheduling a meeting room outside class time), please let me know!
Course Schedule:

Week 1: 1/5-1/7
Preliminaries
Read: Gitlin, Ch. 1; Corman et al., Ch. 1,2 (for Thurs.).

Week 2: 1/12-1/14
Epistemic Relationships: Theory, Practice, and Method
Read: Gitlin, Ch. 2; Corman et al., Ch. 3,4; Vande Berg & Trujillo, Ch. 1.

Week 3: 1/19-1/21
Assumptions, Perspectives; Video: Roger and Me
Read: Gitlin, Ch. 3; Corman et al., Ch. 5,6,7,8; Vande Berg & Trujillo, Ch. 2.

Week 4: 1/26-1/28
Power and Communication
Read: Gitlin, Ch. 4; Corman et al., Ch. 9,10,11,12,13; Vande Berg & Trujillo, Ch. 3.

Week 5: 2/2-2/4
Networks: Relations of Communication
Read: Gitlin, Ch. 5; Corman et al., Ch. 14,15,16,17,18; Vande Berg & Trujillo, Ch. 4.

Week 6: 2/9-2/11
Symbolic Resources: Organizational Culture
Read: Gitlin, Ch. 6; Corman et al., Ch. 19,20,21,22; Vande Berg & Trujillo, Ch. 5.

Week 7: 2/16-2/18
Material Resources: Organizational Decision-making; Uses of Technology in Organizations
Read: Gitlin, Ch. 7; Corman et al., Ch. 23,24,25,26,27; Vande Berg & Trujillo, Ch. 6.

Week 8: 2/23-2/25
Means and Practices: Organizational Politics; Conclusions
Read: Gitlin, Ch. 8; Corman et al., Ch. 28,29,30,32; Vande Berg & Trujillo, Ch. 7.

Week 9: 3/2-3/4
Group Presentations of Television Case Analyses
Read: Corman et al., Ch. 32,33,34,35,36.

Week 10: 3/9-3/11
Television Cases Analyses (cont.); Team Presentations of Research Findings

Week 11: Mon., 3/15, 10:30 AM;
Team Presentations of Research Findings (if time needed)
RESEARCH REPORTS DUE IN CLASS, IN MY OFFICE, OR IN MY MAILBOX NO LATER THAN 5:00 PM, MON., 3/15
SP 423
Organizational Communication

PREPARING FOR READING DISCUSSIONS

Each week, you will meet with a reading-discussion group for part of our meeting. Rather than assign you to specific groups, I am inclined to let you work that out among yourselves. You are expected to come prepared with a discussion outline of the week's readings, including questions you would like to raise for discussion. I will not collect these outlines. Consider your own needs/interests and structure each outline in a way that is useful for YOU. It may be as brief or as detailed as you need it to be. I suggest that you include some or all of the following; these are SUGGESTIONS and GUIDELINES, not instructions:

1. Several concepts that YOU regard as KEY. Define them in your own words (avoid "textbook" definitions) and provide examples from your own experience. Why are these, rather than other, concepts key (your criteria will probably have a lot to do with your own experiences and interests)? I expect that each of you will identify different concepts, and that is fine. You can use these to note diverse frames of reference.

2. Major themes and key points. Avoid EVALUATION here--your purpose is just to make sure you understand the authors' argument(s). Discussion itself should deal ONLY with areas that group members feel would be most profitable to discuss. How do the authors LINK key concepts?

3. What ASSUMPTIONS (stated or unstated) do you think the authors are making in identifying issues and problems, and in offering solutions and conclusions?

4. How does the discussion in the text speak to your own day-to-day experiences? Is it adequate or inadequate? EVALUATE the readings at this point. Is the discussion clear? Consistent? Interesting? Useful? Do you agree with the author(s), or are there alternative ways of explaining the same phenomena?

5. After tackling the arguments in the readings, think of several interesting discussion questions that you can raise within your group. You might think of hypothetical situations that present relevant problems, and ask for possible explanations, solutions, outcomes, etc. The goal here is to put to use in a discussion setting the concepts you are encountering more formally in your readings.

Use this outline to supplement the "case studies" you identify and bring to class.
Organizational Communication

Small-group Presentation of Television Cases Analysis

For this assignment, your group will be conducting a mini-replication of one part of the Vande Berg and Trujillo study. Choose one segment of a television program for analysis. Following one of the options below, set up a coding scheme, code your program for the indicators you've chosen, summarize your results, and discuss what you found vis-a-vis the conclusions in the text. To what extent do your results bear out the general findings of the text? To what extent do they contradict the text?

For the presentation itself, negotiate a division of labor such that each member is able to present some part of your study in (preferably) panel form. This will be fairly informal. Each group will have approximately 20 minutes total for its presentation. You will need to begin with a BRIEF synopsis of the TV program (just your episode) to help contextualize your analysis for the audience. Try to allow a couple of minutes at the end for questions/discussion from the audience. If you would like to show a BRIEF clip or two from your program, come prepared with a tape which you have already cued up. I have reserved the playback for our use.

Analyze ONE of the following areas (or clear an alternative with me before you start):

1. Organizational function of actions (interpersonal, informational, decisional, political, operational) by character type (major, minor, one-shot). Use ch. 3.

2. Organizational function of actions (interpersonal, informational, decisional, political, operational) by position (note that you might want to construct a new set of categories for position). Use ch. 3.

3. Depiction of actions (positive, negative, neutral) by position (again, note that you might want to construct a new set of categories for position). Use ch. 3.

4. Using the indicators dialogue, character, situation, and plot (see ch. 5), analyze ONE of the following value categories below:
   a. work and play
   b. success and failure
   c. individualism and community
   d. reason and emotion
   e. youth and experience
   f. conformity and deviance

Include a brief (roughly two pages) outline of your presentation. Please TYPE your outline. You may also include any other materials (such as handouts, overheads) that you would like for me to consider in evaluating your project (optional).
CLASS RESEARCH PROJECT AND TEAM REPORTS

Our collaborative class project will be a coordinated study of organizations' communication needs and the values those stated needs entail. For this ongoing assignment, you are required to work as a team with several of your colleagues. Each team will work on one part of the study, which we will design together in class. In addition to surveying organizations' communication needs, we will attempt to identify and compare values relevant to different organizational contexts, such as education and labor; private and public sectors; flat and hierarchically-structured organizations, etc.

Your grade will be based on both your individual contributions to class effort and your co-authored team report. Your report grade will be based on your final product, but the other teams and I will be giving you feedback along the way. Below is a rough progression of tasks that will keep you on track. I expect for you to attempt to complete each stage as early as possible for feedback.

Complete the assignment in the following stages:

1. Conduct a literature search for the purpose of identifying current research on organizational values relevant to communication needs. You will find examples of such research in Vande Berg and Trujillo as well as Gitlin, although those citations will be insufficient for this assignment. In addition to scholarly sources, you will want to look at trade journals and other professional sources for relevant citations. (Note: You will want to continue reading the literature after this stage as we design the study and collect data.)

2. Draft a short proposal (two pages maximum, which may be in outline form) for conducting your team's part of the research. Include a brief rationale based on the literature and a description of your proposed procedures for gathering data. (Note: We will coordinate these proposals in class).

3. Collect data. Expect this stage to be more time-consuming and full of snags than anticipated, and pace yourselves accordingly. You will be checking with me and the other research teams along the way for comments and feedback.

4. OUTLINE your research report. Include: (a) an introduction (what you are doing and why); (b) a review of the relevant literature (i.e., what does the research say, and how does it inform your part of the class project?); (c) a description of procedures; (d) a summary description of results; and (e) a discussion/interpretation of the results that will allow you to draw conclusions. Tie your discussion back to the literature--
i.e., do your findings validate or challenge the research literature (perhaps a particular study)? Does your study fill a perceived "hole" in the literature?

5. Write (and rewrite!) the co-authored report. Your final draft will need to be POLISHED, so you will want to begin writing much earlier than this stage (e.g., while you are working out procedures and collecting data, you can draft your introduction and literature review). Acknowledge all outside assistance in an "authors' note" on your cover page. Use a standard style for in-text and end citations (e.g., APA, MLA). Remember to keep back-up files (if you're working on a computer) and/or xerox copies of your work. If you need help with writing, please consult the writing lab and enlist the help of outside proofreaders. Due: 3/15

Length: Roughly 8-10 double-spaced typed pages.

All teams will briefly present their findings during the last week of class.