

Communication Studies 334
Business & Professional Communication

Course Overview

In this course you will explore the difference between mere “communication” and the notion of *competent* workplace communication. You will take a look at a number of different challenges that business communicators face in today’s information-intensive society, and learn how to identify and select the most appropriate communication strategy for addressing each of these challenges. In addition, this course will provide you with an introduction to the primary types of communication that you will take part in as a professional. The overriding goal for this course is to help prepare you for a successful career by providing you with the information necessary to become a competent business and professional communicator.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Explain the role of oral and written communication in the workplace.
2. Successfully use verbal and nonverbal communication strategies for building and sustaining positive first impressions.
3. Apply interpersonal skills effectively and appropriately in professional environments to sustain good working relationships.
4. Identify ways to create harmonious relationships with diverse coworkers and colleagues.
5. Write professional business letters, resumes, and memos.
6. Prepare a sound listening plan to increase your effectiveness at work.
7. Identify interview strategies important to the role of both an interviewer and interviewee.
8. Structure and facilitate business meetings by developing agendas, scheduling meetings, and ensuring participation by all members.
9. Identify how to use collaborative negotiation as a way of managing a variety business problems and disagreements.
10. Apply presentational skills effectively and appropriately in professional environments.
11. Select and competently use media that are appropriate to a given task.
12. Use SMART techniques to set goals for improving workplace communication and performance.
13. Distinguish between ethical and unethical communication practices in the workplace.
14. Identify communication skills critical to becoming a communication consultant or trainer.

Course Requirements

Persuasive Sales Presentation with Digital Slides--Each student will prepare and deliver a 5-6 minute extemporaneous, persuasive presentation. The purpose of this presentation is to “sell” or “pitch” a product or service to your classmates. Your presentation should describe a problem and then offer your product or service as a solution to the problem. In addition, your presentation should help your listeners visualize the advantages or benefits of “purchasing” your product or service, and your conclusion should “close the sale” by requesting that your audience purchase whatever you are trying to sell. Come prepared to “wow” and “dazzle” your class with a great sales presentation!

Finally, you will prepare 3-5 digital slides using the guidelines discussed in your reading material to help support the specific purpose of your persuasive presentation. These slides should be carefully integrated into your presentation and provide visual support for the information being discussed.

Assignment: Persuasive Sales Presentation--30 points
Content Outline—5 points

Resume and Cover Letter--You will prepare a *functional* resume and a cover letter using the format discussed in class.

Assignments: Resume--20 points
Cover letter--10 points

“My Strengths” Mini-talk--You will meet with your team to videotape an oral report of 2-3 of your leadership strengths. You will discuss which of your strengths describe you best and give examples of when and how you’ve demonstrated some of these strengths at school or at work. There will be no make-up for this project.

Assignment: “My Leadership Strengths” Mini-talk—5 points

Leadership Themes Reaction Paper--You will submit a 2-3 page typewritten reaction paper in which you discuss your five signature leadership themes, as reported in the results of your Strengths Finder questionnaire. You will discuss which of your leadership themes describe you best, which you use most frequently, and which you anticipate using most in your career. In addition, you will give examples of when and how you’ve demonstrated these leadership themes at school or at work. Finally, you will consider your teammate’s leadership themes and analyze the similarities and differences that exist within your team. What strengths and weaknesses characterize your team based upon the results of your analysis?

Assignment: Leadership Themes Reaction Paper--20 points

Team Training Presentation--One of the major assignments for this class involves working with your team to develop a training presentation on a current topic in the field of business and professional communication. Possible topics include:

- Listen actively
- Become more assertive
- Avoid issues of sexual harassment and discrimination
- Use and interpret customers' nonverbal messages
- Manage conflict and crisis in the workplace
- Deal with angry customers
- Develop collaborative teams
- Solve problems and make decisions in groups and teams
- Lead and participate in meetings
- Deliver sales presentations
- Use computer graphics in business presentations
- Persuade customers to purchase a product
- Manage time and be more productive
- Present briefings, reports, and presentations
- Speak on camera
- Improve the quality of employee communication
- Communicate the leadership vision of an organization
- Communicate with people from different cultures
- Lead others by being collaborative
- Develop a cooperative management style
- Understand laws and legal issues related to privacy at work
- Prepare for and perform employee appraisal interviews

For this project, your team will first develop a list of your specific training objectives that are based on your client's training needs. Once your team has identified its training objectives, they will prepare and present a 25-minute presentation to the class, followed by a brief question-and-answer session. Visual aids (i.e., posters, flip charts, transparencies, videotapes and/or computer-generated graphics) must be used to assist your team during its presentation. Cooperation and teamwork is essential for the successful completion of this project.

Assignment: Training Objectives—5 points (assigned by instructor/per team)
Team Presentation--40 points (assigned by instructor/per team)
Individual Evaluation--15 points (assigned by team members)

Performance Appraisal—You will prepare a written 4-page performance appraisal of your work in this class throughout the semester, based on format discussed in class. You will be asked to make some generalizations about your own performance and back up your appraisals with specific examples of how you have demonstrated these skills in class. In addition, you will use the “SMART Technique” to focus on some goals you have for improving your performance in the future.

Assignment: Performance Appraisal – 20 points

Exams--The midterm and final exams will include multiple-choice, true-false, and short-answer questions. Exam questions will be taken from the text and class discussions. Instructor must be notified prior to or on the day of the exam if you need a make-up. With such notification, there will be a limited opportunity for make up exams.

Assignments: Midterm--50 points
Final--50 points

Attendance & Participation--Your regular attendance and active participation is extremely important to your successful completion of this class. Three points are assigned for every complete class session you attend. If you arrive to class late, it is your responsibility to let me know that you are present.

In order to encourage full-class participation, on the evenings that you and your classmates present speeches and team projects, students not in attendance will have six points deducted from their final point total for the class.

Attendance--45 points

Evaluation

All assignments must be received at the beginning of class on the due date. Assignments may be submitted up to one week after the due date for a maximum of half credit. Assignments submitted more than one week after the due date will not be accepted except for situations involving documented emergencies.

Persuasive Sales Presentation with Digital Slides

Oral Presentation	30 points
Content outline	5 points

<i>Leadership Themes Project</i>	
My Leadership Strengths Mini-talk	5 points
Leadership themes reaction paper	20 points
<i>Resume</i>	
Functional resume	20 points
Cover letter	10 points
<i>Team Training Presentation</i>	
Training objectives	5 points
Team presentation	40 points
Individual evaluation	15 points
<i>Performance Self-Appraisal</i>	
Written Self-appraisal	30 points
<i>Exams</i>	
Midterm	50 points
Final	50 points
<i>Attendance & Participation</i>	45 points
<i>Total</i>	325 points

Your final grade for the class will be based on the following scale:

325 - 293	A
292 - 260	B
259 - 228	C
227 - 195	D
194 or below	= F

Academic Dishonesty Policy

Any student who is caught cheating on an examination or submitting the work of another person as if it were his or her own will receive the grade of "F" in this class.

Cell Phone Usage Policy

As a courtesy to your classmates and the instructor, please turn off your cell phone during class.

Withdrawal Policy

The conditions under which students may withdraw and the documents that must be submitted are described in the CSULB Catalog. This policy statement is a brief reminder of some of those provisions:

Students registering in this course are responsible for completing the course or for withdrawing during the first two weeks of the class if they do not intend to complete the work. The student is responsible to officially apply for withdrawal from this class at the Admissions and Records Office, whether the student has attended the class or not. If the student doesn't withdraw from

the class during the first two weeks of the class, he or she will receive the grade of “U” (unauthorized incomplete) in the course.

After the first two weeks of the semester, a final grade of “W” is permissible only for serious and compelling reasons that can be substantiated by documentation (e.g., a significant and ongoing personal illness that required the documented care of a physician or other circumstances beyond the student’s control which prevented attendance in class). It should be noted that a serious and compelling reason does not include unsatisfactory performance in this class.

Tentative Course Schedule

August 26	Icebreaker: “Dots” Course and Syllabus Overview
	Discussion: The Importance of Symbols The Process of Human Communication Communication Competence Formal and Informal Communication Networks
	Exercise: Guidelines for Using Mobile Phones and Voice Mail
	Personal Data Form (due at end of class period)
	Reading: Chapter 1
September 2	Exercise: Communication Bingo
	Discussion: Developing & Delivering and Effective Persuasive Sales Presentation with Digital Slides
	Video: <i>How to Write and Deliver Great Speeches</i>
	<i>Assign persuasive sales presentation with digital slides</i> (due Sept 30 and Oct 7)
	Reading: Chapters 10, 11, 12, & 13 plus class handout about digital slides
September 9	Discussion: Planning & Conducting an Employment Interview
	Exercise: Interview Agenda Preparation
	<i>Assign cover letter and functional resume</i> (draft due Sept 30 & final version due Oct 7)
	Reading: Chapters 6 & 7 plus Yana Parker resume book

- September 16 Panel interviews and “hires” team leaders.
- Skill Demonstration: *Using Small Talk to Build Rapport and Initiate an Employment Interview*
- Discussion: Equal Employment Guidelines
- Reading:
- September 23 Team leaders announced
Teams meet to review cover letters and resumes
- Discussion: The Interviewee’s Perspective
- Skill Demonstration: *Selling Yourself in an Employment Interview*
Skill Demonstration: *Structuring Answers to Behavior-Based Questions Using the PAR Method*
- Exercise: Good Team/Bad Team Experiences
Discussion: Becoming a Team (moving from a collection of people to a team)
Exercise: Brainstorming Ground Rules
- Assign “My Strengths” mini-talk (due Sept 30 through Oct 21)*
- Draft of Cover Letter & Functional Resume Due**
- Reading:
- September 30 **Persuasive Presentation with Digital Slides and Content Outline Due**
Team 1 completes “My Strengths” mini talk with instructor
- October 7 **Persuasive Presentation with Digital Slides and Content Outline Due**
Team 2 completes “My Strengths” mini talk with instructor
- Final version of Cover Letter & Functional Resume Due**
- October 14 Discussion: The Silent Language of Successful Communication
You Tube: Amy Cuddy--*Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are*

Teams 3 and 4 complete “My Strengths” mini talk assignment with instructor

October 21

Midterm Exam

Introduction to Harley-Davidson consulting project

Discuss Strengths Finder Reaction Paper assignment (results due Oct 28; reaction paper due Nov 18)

Team 5 completes “My Strengths” mini-talk with instructor

October 28

Discussion: Managing an Interactive Group Meeting
Building Consensus

Video: *Mining Group Gold*

Reading: Chapter 2

Teams meet to review ground rules and begin planning for training project and presentation.

Strengths Finder Leadership Theme Results Due

Discuss Team Training Project and Presentation (Due Dec 2 and Dec 9)

Reading: Chapters 8 & 9

November 4

Discussion: Leaders & Managers
Leadership Approaches in Organizations

Exercise: Tower Building

Teams meet to discuss results of Strengths Finder assessment and to continue planning for training project and presentation

November 11

Holiday: *Veterans Day*

November 18

Discussion: Performance Appraisals
Defensive vs. Supportive Communication
The SMART Technique for Preparing Goals

Exercise: Using “I” Language

Skill Demonstration: *Giving Compliments*

Skill Demonstration: *Using Assertive Messages to Request a Person to Change his/her Behavior*

Assign Performance Self-Appraisal (Due Dec 9)

Strengths Finder Reaction Paper Due

Reading: Chapters 3, 4, & 5

November 25 Discussion: Contingency Planning and Crisis Management

Final Planning Session for team presentations

December 2 **Team Training Projects and Presentations Due**
Written Appraisals of Team Members Due

December 9 **Team Training Projects and Presentations Due**
Written Appraisals of Team Members Due

Performance Self-Appraisal Due

December 16 **Final Exam (7:15 - 9:15 p.m.)**