

Short Form Syllabus
Communication in the Professions
MCOM 3990
CRN 15740
Fall 2011
Department of Mass Communication
University of Central Oklahoma

Instructor: Samuel G. Lawrence, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Voice Mail: (405) 974-5584

Departmental Telephone: (405) 974-5112

Departmental Fax: (405) 974-5125

E-Mail: slawrence7@uco.edu

Use the WebCT Mail tool for student-teacher communication. From Monday (8 a.m.) through Friday (5 p.m.), I respond to emails within 48 hours. Weekend messages are answered by 5 p.m. on the following Tuesday.

Skype: samuel.g.lawrence999

Classroom: CB 206

Office: CB 210

Online/Campus Office Hours: MW (9:00-10:00 a.m.); TR (8:00-9:00 a.m.); W (10:00-11:00 a.m.); and by appointment

What's In It for You?

Successful completion of this course means that you are able to:

- describe how various organizational representatives interact with lay persons
- identify how representatives and lay persons adapt their communicative practices to different institutional contexts
- apply research findings in developing training materials
- envision your own identity and practice as a professional communicator

Required Text

Heritage, J., & Clayman, S. (2010). *Talk in action: Interactions, identities, and institutions*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. (\$39.95 New; \$29.95 Used)

Assignments

Training Materials. This course focuses on the ways in which organizational representatives interact with lay persons. These organizational contexts feature professional communicators such as emergency (911) call-takers, physicians, journalists, and public speakers. Typically these professionals interact at the boundaries of organizations with or on behalf of members of the general public.

The class will be divided into six groups. Each group will research the communication patterns of one of three institutional contexts: (1) emergency (911) calls, (2) doctor-patient communication, and (3) broadcast news interviews.

Each group will produce a 15-page training manual that draws upon the research in our textbook, external sources (see “For Further Reading” at the end of each chapter), and an interview with an experienced professional communicator (e.g., 911 call-taker, physician, or journalist). The training manual will identify the professional’s communication challenges (e.g., determining the genuineness of an alleged emergency) and the best practices for meeting them. The manual will be written for professionals-in-training (e.g., first- or second-year medical students) although it will take into account the perspective and challenges of the professional’s interaction partner (i.e., citizens, patients, and newsmakers).

The manual will be the basis for assigning a grade to each group member. While group members can expect to receive the same group grade, the individual grade, based on the input of your peers, will vary.

Examinations. The examinations combine multiple-choice, true-false, matching questions, and short-answer essays.

Class preparation and participation. Students are expected to show evidence of preparation for class. The course schedule below identifies readings that are to be completed *before* class time. This expectation may be evaluated through pop quizzes as well as classroom talk. In addition, students may be asked to complete homework assignments or participate in exercises. The overall pattern of evidence determines the student’s grade.

This grade may be adjusted depending on students’ professionalism and class attendance (see policies below).

Point System and Grading Scale

<i>Assignments</i>	<i>Points</i>
Test 1	150
Test 2	150
Test 3	150
Training Manual: Group Grade	200
Peer Evaluation	200
Preparation and Participation	150
Total	1000

Final grades depend on the accumulation of points. To compute your grade at any time during the semester, add up the number of points earned and divide that total by the number of possible points for graded assignments. Compare your percentage with the percentages below.

A	from 900 to 1000 points	Or	from 90% to 100%
B	from 800 to 899 points	Or	from 80% to 89.9%
C	from 700 to 799 points	Or	from 70% to 79.9%
D	from 600 to 699 points	Or	from 60% to 69.9%
F	599 points and below	Or	59.9% and below

Grade-killers. Taking a zero on any assignment will severely damage your course grade. For example, taking a zero on two 50-point assignments makes an “A” impossible. The effect is to lower your grade by one letter (e.g., from a “B” to a “C”).

Professionalism

The vast majority of college students are diligent in meeting their academic responsibilities (often while working thirty hours a week and caring for a family). They do the reading in advance. They show up on time and are considerate of others. For example, a normally punctual student quietly takes a seat in the back row on the only day she is late. These students don’t leave class early unless they’ve told me beforehand. They take bathroom breaks *before* class starts (not during class unless it’s an emergency).

Unprofessional conduct includes arriving late for class, leaving early, leaving then returning to class, engaging in side conversations, napping, ringing cell phones, surfing the Internet, doing homework, and anything else that disrupts teaching and learning. Infractions, depending on their seriousness, result in point deductions from the preparation and participation grade.

Technology in the classroom is a privilege, not a right. Cell phones must be *turned off*. Answering calls during class time is allowable only with prior permission and very restricted circumstances (e.g., family emergencies). If anyone reads email or surfs the Internet during class, their device (e.g., laptop, blackberry, cell phone, etc.) will be banned. Repeat offenders risk being disinvented from class (and slated for a teacher-student conference).

Attendance and Punctuality

I understand that all of us have busy lives apart from this class. Family- and work-related responsibilities make justifiable claims on our time and energy. This class should not be the number one priority in our lives, but it should be a priority. Class attendance and punctuality have consequences for the student’s preparation grade and final grade.

1. Perfect attendance (at all 30 class meetings) results in a five-point bonus.
2. Students are allowed a maximum of two absences to manage out-of-class business (e.g., sickness)—no point deductions and no questions asked.
3. Missing more than a week of class results in five-point deductions per absence beyond two.

Showing up on time is a mark of professionalism. Circumstances can cause sporadic lateness, and that’s understandable. A *pattern* of lateness, on the other hand, is unprofessional. Students who arrive late to three or more classes risk point deductions.

Make-Ups

A tight schedule severely limits make-ups. You're expected to attend all assignments when scheduled, except for a compelling reason. As soon as you learn that you will miss a test, notify me immediately.

1. Documentation must be provided ASAP.
 - a. Some university clinics do not sign excuses for students; seek medical attention from professionals that do sign them.
 - b. Documentation must include the name and telephone number of the contact person.
 - c. Documentation may be faxed to (405) 974-5125. Please designate me as the recipient.
 - d. I reserve the right to request original documents.
 - e. Make-ups cannot be granted or scheduled without adequate documentation.

2. The *UCO Faculty Handbook* (August, 2010) allows the following as excused absences:
 - a. Travel considered part of the instructional program of the university and requiring absence from the class (e.g., field trips, research presentations, etc.);
 - b. Invited participation in activities directly and officially sponsored by and in the interest of the university (e.g., athletic teams, debate teams, dance company, etc.);
 - c. Jury duty;
 - d. Military obligation ...
 - e. Serious illness or injury; and
 - f. Death or serious illness in the immediate family.

3. Weak excuses such as "overslept," "had a cold/hangover," "didn't study," "went on vacation," "had to work," "broke up with my boy/girlfriend," etc. can't be accepted.

Academic Honesty

Protecting the integrity of students' hard-earned achievements is a sacred trust. To that end, I will be vigilant in detecting and sanctioning any form of academic dishonesty. Departmental, College, and University Policies are found at the end of this syllabus.

Schedule

This syllabus and schedule may be amended as circumstances require. Check your WebCT and UCONNECT email on a regular basis for changes and announcements.

Date	Topics/Activities	Do Before Class
<i>Week 1</i>		
T Aug. 23	(1) Course Introduction	
R Aug. 25	(2) Text Overview; Some Ways of Working; The "Training Materials" Assignment	Read Chapter 1; Learn the Transcription Symbols on pp. 283-287

<i>Week 2</i>		
T Aug. 30	(3) The Study of Talk-in-Interaction: Origins	Read Chapter 2; Focus on pp. 7-11
R Sept. 01	(4) Introducing Conversation Analysis	Read Chapter 2; Focus on pp. 12-15
<i>Week 3</i>		
T Sept. 06	(5) Studying Talk as an Institution; Studying Talk in Institutions	Read Chapter 2; Focus on pp. 15-19
R Sept. 08	(6) Context and Sequencing	Read Chapter 3; Focus on pp. 20-24
<i>Week 4</i>		
T Sept. 13	(7) Questions and Answers	Read Chapter 3; Focus on pp. 24-32
R Sept. 15	(8) Dimensions of Institutional Talk: Turn-Taking	Read Chapter 4; Focus on pp. 34-40
<i>Week 5</i>		
T Sept. 20	(9) Dimensions of Institutional Talk (cont.)	Read Chapter 4; Focus on pp. 40-44
R Sept. 22	(10) Dimensions of Institutional Talk (cont.); Preview Test 1	Read Chapter 4; Focus on pp. 44-50
<i>Week 6</i>		
T Sept. 27	(11) Test 1	Review Chapters 1-4
R Sept. 29	(12) Emergency Calls as Institutional Talk	Read Chapter 5; Focus on pp. 53-61
<i>Week 7</i>		
T Oct. 04	(13) Emergency Calls as Institutional Talk (cont.); Revisit "Training Materials"	Read Chapter 5; Focus on pp. 61-68
R Oct. 06	(14) Review Test 1; Revisit "Training Materials"	
<i>Week 8</i>		
T Oct. 11	(15) Gatekeeping and Entitlement: Part 1	Read Chapter 6; Focus on pp. 69-78

R Oct. 13	(16) Gatekeeping and Entitlement: Part 2	Read Chapter 6; Focus on pp. 78-86
<i>Week 9</i>		
T Oct. 18	(17) Patients' Presentations of Medical Issues: The Doctor's Problem	Read Chapter 8; Focus on pp. 103-118
R Oct. 20	No Class: Fall Break	
<i>Week 10</i>		
T Oct. 25	(18) Patients' Presentations of Medical Issues: The Doctor's Problem	Read Chapter 9; Focus on pp. 119-134
R Oct. 27	(19) Preview Test 2; Revisit Training Materials (with a focus on Group Presentations)	
<i>Week 11</i>		
T Nov. 01	(20) Test 2	Review Chapters 5, 6, 8, 9
R Nov. 03	(21) History-Taking: Part 1	Read Chapter 10; Focus on pp. 135-143
<i>Week 12</i>		
T Nov. 08	(22) History-Taking: Part 2; Review Test 2	Read Chapter 10; Focus on pp. 143-153
R Nov. 10	(23) News Interview Turn-Taking	Read Chapter 15; Focus on pp. 215-226
<i>Week 13</i>		
T Nov. 15	(24) Question Design in News Interviews: Part 1	Read Chapter 16; Focus on pp. 227-234
R Nov. 17	(25) Question Design in News Interviews: Part 2 Due: Training Manuals	Read Chapter 16; Focus on pp. 234-244
<i>Week 14</i>		
T Nov. 22	(26) Audiences and Speeches: Part 1	Read Chapter 18; Focus on pp. 263-271
R Nov. 24	No Class: University Holiday	
<i>Week 15</i>		
T Nov. 29	(27) Audiences and Speeches: Part 2	Read Chapter 18; Focus on pp. 271-279

R Dec. 01	(28) Group Presentations	
<i>Week 16</i>		
T Dec. 06	(29) Group Presentations	
R Dec. 08	(30) Group Presentations	
<i>Finals Week</i>		
T Dec. 13	Test 3 (1:00-2:15 p.m.)	Review Chapters 10, 15, 16, 18