

Michael L. Kent, Ph.D.

School of Communication

Applied Topics in Organizational Comm.: Public Relations for Managers

Comm. 4800-105 | 43651 | Dunbar, 4206 | M/W/F, 11-11:50 a.m.

Office Location: 220 Sprau Tower

Office Telephone: (269) 387-5369

Office Hours: M/W, 12:45-1:45, and by appt.

E-mail: MKent@WMich.Edu

Web: <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~mkent/Index.html>

Course Description

Applied Topics in Organizational Communication is a rotating topics, capstone course, in which students evaluate organizations' internal and external communication to solve organizational problems, improve communication with stakeholders and clients, and develop communication programs and campaigns to address organizational exigencies.

Students will select (or be assigned) clients and individually and in groups address organizational communication issues. Each group will conduct formative and evaluative research, conduct a communication audit, and develop Web and print based materials for dealing with organizational concerns

Emphasis this semester will be placed on dialogic communication, the World Wide Web, Writing and presentational skills, and conducting effective research.

Goals/Objectives

- To learn about dialogic communication and its role in effective organization-public communication.
- To learn about webbed communication and how to more effectively communicate with publics online.
- To learn about the role of persuasion in message design and campaign writing.
- To learn how communication theory informs campaign praxis and success.
- To teach an assortment of campaign management heuristics such as MBO, systems theory, RACE, etc.
- To learn advanced research and organizational planning skills.
- To learn from organizational professionals about effective management skills.

Required Texts

- Be prepared to print weekly readings distributed via e-mail, Web CT, CD, or PDF. I will post all readings that I have access to as PDF files in a folder on my Web site: <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~mkent/Com480/>. See syllabus for readings. Note, if there is an article, book, etc., assigned that you cannot locate, be sure to take the initiative to obtain the article from the WMU library, online, etc. If you cannot locate a reading, then contact me in time to obtain it (not the hour before class).

Miscellaneous

- All readings and reading questions are due on the date indicated.
- Missed exams cannot be made up for any reason.
- Exams may only be taken early with *prior permission*.
- **Having even one spelling error will result in a zero for an assignment.**
- Late assignments will be discounted 10% per *calendar day*.
- If you do not have an assignment ready to turn in, don't skip class. Come to class anyway. There is no value in skipping class.
- Come see me in office hours with questions or for feedback *before* assignments are due. Office hours are there for you. You pay for office hours so use them.

- Familiarize yourself with my handout on APA style and follow it for all assignments that involve citations.
- I expect you to take your class work seriously. “I had to work” is not an excuse for poor performance or turning in work late. You employer needs to be asked to understand that you are a student and to give you some leeway. If you employer will not do that, get a new employer. *Your education is much more important than your current job is!*
- Get into the habit of backing up all of your work as you go. For maximum safety, triple backup your work (get two flash drives and save a copy to your hard drive). You should save your work regularly. Microsoft Word has an option for “AutoRecover” (word/preferences/save).
- ***Come up with a method to help me remember your name.***

Class Policies

Formatting and Writing Expectations

Professional Communication is characterized by effective writing. As a result, professional writing standards are expected on all assignments. Professional standards include: correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and careful proofreading. No spelling errors are allowed. *Having even one spelling error will result in a zero for the assignment.* Except when otherwise noted, all assignments should be double-spaced (27 lines-per-page), have one-inch margins all around, and be written in Bookman or Bookman Old Style 11 pt. **Never use** Arial, Helvetica, Times or Times New Roman, for any assignment in my class. I will not accept it.

Attendance Policy

In the business world, attendance is an important aspect of professionalism. Indeed, “just showing up” is sometimes the most important aspect of job performance and can mean the difference between a promotion or a layoff. Additionally, attribution theory tells us that even the best students in the world will be perceived as slackers if they do not come to class. Getting all As on the tests/assignments is not sufficient. Attendance is a required aspect of my class just like doing the reading and taking tests.

Western Michigan’s attendance policy reads as follows: “Students are responsible directly to their instructors for class and laboratory attendance, and for petitions to excuse absences” (Catalog, 2003–2005, p. 29). In light of this, and because of the importance of attendance noted above, my attendance policy is as follows: *Students may miss the equivalent of one week of classes without penalty (on a two day a week schedule). If three classes are missed, your final grade will be reduced by 5%; if four classes are missed, your final grade will be reduced by 10%. Missing more than four classes will result in a failing grade for the course.*

Note: There are no excused absences. Being sick, getting in an automobile accident, going on a job interview, attending a conference or a funeral, getting arrested, etc., will not be excused. Coming late or leaving early 3 times also equals an absence. Arriving “late” or leaving “early” (my judgment) will also count as an absence.

† **NB:** If you need to miss a day because of a religious holiday, you need to tell me early in the semester what day you will miss. The day before a religious holiday is unacceptable.

The only other activity that I will excuse besides religious holidays is jury duty, and only if you are on a jury—you report for jury duty and are assigned or excused in plenty of time to make my class.

For all other reasons that you might miss class, be sure that you have not wasted your allotted absences so that you can afford to miss a class with no penalty.

Plagiarism Policy

The University is an academic community of scholars. Academic dishonesty is a very serious offense against the integrity of this community and will not be tolerated. All academic work submitted by you is assumed to be your own *original work* and to contain your own thought, research, and self-expression. Work that borrows the ideas, organization, or wording, from others must be properly acknowledged. Similarly, work that was conducted for another class should not be passed off as original.

Additionally, anytime a student or professional attempts to deceive another by pretending to do work, or take credit for work, that they actually did not do, including changing the font size or style, triple spacing, claiming to have submitted an assignment on time that the professor must have “lost” etc., s/he is engaging in academic dishonesty or “cheating.” What you are attempting to do is no different from copying from someone else’s test. The consequences of this will be just as serious as plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the unauthorized or inappropriate use of the words or ideas of others. Plagiarism occurs when written or spoken material is borrowed (even from oneself), in whole or in part, and passed off as original by a writer or speaker. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, presenting someone else’s ideas, speech, presentation, essay, book review, or news release as original. Plagiarism also includes failing to document or cite the source of word-for-word or paraphrased material in oral presentations or written assignments. *It is my policy to pursue plagiarism vigorously, to fail students who plagiarize for the entire class, and to report cases of plagiarism to the university administration.*

NB: Many students are caught each semester and failed for plagiarism. If even one student in one hundred cheats, the number is too high. In a typical semester, a couple hundred students are caught cheating at a school this size. For students planning to graduate, plagiarizing an assignment is quite possibly the stupidest thing they could do. Do not engage in plagiarism in any form. If you are ever unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, ask me or someone else in the department. At the very least, send an e-mail out to me at two in the morning with your question to CYA and explain what you will do to try to be accurate with your citations. When you enter the business world, plagiarism will not only get you fired, but also can ruin your career depending upon what ideas/content you steal.

There is a very simple rule to follow in order to avoid plagiarism and never get in trouble.

Cite everything that is not your own words or idea. If you know that someone else said it, wrote it, or thought it, anywhere, even some guy at a party, cite the source. Do this and you will never get in trouble for plagiarism.

Calculating Grades

To calculate your overall grade throughout the semester, you simply multiply the points you earned on a particular assignment by the points the assignment was worth, add all of the points up for each assignment, and then divide by the total. E.g., say you received 75% on your first presentation, which is worth 10% of the course total, so you earned 7.5 points ($.75 \times 10 = 7.5$). Similarly, if you received an 85% on your first exam, worth 10% of the total, you have 8.5 more points ($.85 \times 10 = 8.5$). Finally, if you earned a 90% on your research paper you would have 18 more points ($.90 \times 20 = 18$). Finally, if you add all of the points that you have earned, and divide by the possible points for the assignments completed ($7.5 + 8.5 + 18 = 34$)/40=85% overall. Here are several samples of how to calculate your grade:

80% (10 pts.) $.8 \times 10 =$ 8.0 pts	83% (10 pts.) $.83 \times 10 =$ 8.3 pts	86% (10 pts.) $.86 \times 10 =$ 8.6 pts
85% (15 pts.) $.85 \times 15 =$ 12.75 pts	65% (15 pts.) $.84 \times 15 =$ 9.75 pts	88% (15 pts.) $.88 \times 15 =$ 13.2 pts
88% (20 pts.) $.88 \times 20 =$ 17.6 pts	80% (20 pts.) $.80 \times 20 =$ 16.0 pts	95% (20 pts.) $.95 \times 20 =$ 19.0 pts
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
$(8 + 12.75 + 17.6 = 38.35) / 45 =$ 85.2%	$(8.3 + 9.75 + 16 = 34.05) / 45 =$ 75.7%	$(8.6 + 13.2 + 19 = 40.8) / 45 =$ 91.7%

Grading Scale

A	94–100	BA	88–93	CB	76–81	DC	65–69
		B	82–87	C	70–75	D	60–64
						F(E)	0–59

Assignments

Assignment	Points
Extra Credit	†0–10%
Exam I: Take home (content TBA)	10%
Exam II: Take home (content TBA)	10%
Presentation I: (Communication Audit, Research on Organization/Issue, Client’s needs, etc.) ††	10%
Presentation II: (Client proposals, more research, timeline, budget, etc.) ††	10%
Presentation III: (Campaign/program materials, research/evaluation, org. case study, etc.) ††	10%
Research Paper: (12–15 pages, 12+ “scholarly” [not internet] sources, details provided)	20%
Written Doc./Activity: (depends upon the client’s needs and my approval)	10%
Written Doc./Activity: (depends upon the client’s needs and my approval)	5–10%
Written Doc./Activity: (depends upon the client’s needs and my approval)	5–10%
Written Doc./Activity: (depends upon the client’s needs and my approval)	5–10%
Total	100%

† For each class, you may earn 1% extra credit for preparing a list of discussion questions based on the class period’s readings. Follow the samples provided. For full credit you must write one page (single spaced, 50 lines) of questions and follow APA style. Do them all and you may receive up to 10% extra credit on your final grade.

†† Group work is an unavoidable aspect of everyday professional life. Consequently, making group projects a part of a capstone class such as this is reasonable. Because groups are typically collective entities, grades are assigned for the entire group, i.e., everyone will get the same grade based on the performance of the entire group. However, to mitigate the poor performance of a group because of a particular member’s lack of participation, group members will rate the performance of other group members. Based on those evaluations, individual grades may be raised or lowered at my discretion. When I attend group meetings, I should see everyone there as well. Attendance at group meetings is mandatory as is class attendance.

Communication 480–105: Public Relations for Managers

Tentative Course Calendar

Date	Day	Activity/Reading.....Assignment Due
Sept. 6	1	Class Introduction/Overview | Clients | Expectations | Locating articles Read: Syllabus, Kent’s Writing Rules
Sept. 8	2	Locating Articles | Citing Sources & APA Style Read: Kent, M. L. (2005). Conducting Better Research: Google Scholar and the Future of Search Technology. <i>Public Relations Quarterly</i> 50(4), 35–40 (My Web site); Google Scholar (on my Class Web site).
Sept. 11	3	Internet/WWW Read: Kent, M. L. (2001). Managerial rhetoric and the metaphor of the World Wide Web. <i>Critical Studies in Media Communication</i> 18(3), 359–375. (My Web site).
Sept. 13	4	Internet/WWW Read: Kent, M. L., Harrison, T. R., & Taylor, M. (2006). A critique of Internet polls as symbolic representation and pseudo-events. <i>Communication Studies</i> 57(3), 299–315. (My Web site).
Sept. 15	5	.....WMU, School of Communication, Retreat Get caught up on any reading
Sept. 18	6	Internet/WWW—Read one of the chapters of your choice (see below) and prepare a one-page (single-spaced) handout for your classmates summarizing the article. Read: Select an article/Chapter from Kent, 2001 or Kent at al., 2006’s bibliography and read that for class. For most of the articles/chapters I can send you copies. Start on WMU’s Web site and the library then come to me if you cannot locate what you are looking for. Note: <i>Clear the article/chapter with me first so that everyone reads different articles/chapters.</i>
Sept. 20	7	Dialogue Read: Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the World Wide Web. <i>Public Relations Review</i> 24(3), 321–334. (My Web site).
Sept. 22	8	Dialogue Arrange Initial Meeting with Clients Read: Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (2002). Toward a dialogic theory of public relations. <i>Public Relations Review</i> 28(1), 21–37. (My Web site).
Sept. 25	9	Research | Communication Audits Read: Kent, Research chapter I (on my Class Web site)
Sept. 27	10	Research Read: Kent, Research chapter II (on my Class Web site)
Sept. 29	11	Groups Meet in Class
Oct. 2	12	Dialogue Arrange Follow-up Meeting with Clients Read: Select a chapter from Cissna, Anderson, & Arnett and read that for class. You will need to see me to obtain a copy of the chapter that you need. Start on WMU’s Web site and the library then come to me if you cannot locate what you are looking for. Note: <i>Chapters will be distributed on a first-come first-served basis so that everyone reads different articles/chapters.</i>
Oct. 4	13	MBO | Case Studies: Fire Ants, Recycling, others TBA Read: Kent, Chapter 8; Case Studies 1–5 (on my Class Web site)
Oct. 6	14	Groups Meet in Class
Oct. 9	15	..... Presentation I
Oct. 11	16	Dialogue and the Web Read: Taylor, M., Kent, M., & White, W. (2001). How activist organizations are using the Internet to build relationships. <i>Public Relations Review</i> 27(3), 263–284 (My Web site); Kent, M. L., Taylor, M., & White, W. (2003). The relationship between Web site design and

organizational responsiveness to stakeholders. *Public Relations Review* 29(1), 63–77. (My Web site).

Oct. 13	17	TBA	
Oct. 16	18	Design	Distribute Exam I
		Read: Kent, Chapter 4, Aesthetics	
Oct. 18	19	Audience Adaptation	
		Read: Kent, Book Chapters 11, 12 (on my Class Web site)	
Oct. 20	20	Groups Meet in Class	
Oct. 23	21	.....	Exam I
Oct. 25	22	Web Communication Continued	
		Read: Kent, Book Chapter 16 (on my Class Web site)	
Oct. 27	23	Groups Meet in Class	Research Papers Due
Oct. 30	24	Message Design	
		Read: Kent, Book Chapter 10, 1 st third (on my Class Web site)	
Nov. 1	25	Budgeting/Time Management	
		Read: Review Chapter 4 (MBO)	
Nov. 3	26	Groups Meet in Class	
Nov. 6	27	Budgeting/Time Management	
		Read: TBA	
Nov. 8	28	.....	Presentation II
Nov. 10	29	Groups Meet in Class	
Nov. 13	30	Message Design	
		Read: Kent, Book Chapter 10, 2 nd third (on my Class Web site)	
Nov. 15	31	.....	NCA Convention | Groups Meet
Nov. 17	32	.....	NCA Convention | Groups Meet
Nov. 20	33	Message Design	
		Read: Kent, Book Chapter 10, 3 rd third (on my Class Web site)	
Nov. 22	34	.....	Thanksgiving Break
Nov. 24	35	Editing/Proofing	
		Read: Kent, Book, Chapter 3 (on my Class Web site)	
Nov. 27	36	Theories	
		Read: Kent, Book, Chapter 7 (on my Class Web site)	
Nov. 29	37	Theories Continued	Exam II distributed
		Read: TBA	
Dec. 1	38	Groups Meet in Class	
Dec. 4	39	Theories Applied	
		Read: Select one of the articles cited in Kent, Theories, Chapter 7, get it, read it for class, and Prepare a two-page single-spaced memo explaining what you learned from the article that you read and how it might inform your group's work.	
Dec. 6	40	.....	Exam II
Dec. 13			Final Exam Day, Wednesday, 10:15–12:15 p.m.
		.....	Presentation III

Miscellaneous

Sept. 11	Registration (drop/add) closes; end of 100% refund.
Sept. 13	Late add fee begins; withdrawals start being recorded on transcripts as "W."
Sept. 13	Withdraw recorded as "W" on transcripts.
Sept. 29	End of 50% refund for <u>complete withdrawal</u> .
Oct. 25	End of 25% refund for <u>complete withdrawal</u> .
Nov. 6	Last day to withdrawal from Fall classes.
Nov. 22–26	Thanksgiving break.
Dec. 11–15	Final exam week.

Get Out of Jail Free

This coupon entitles the bearer to one of the following (check box):

- Eliminate or reduce a late penalty on one written assignment (depending upon the severity of the infraction).
- Eliminate or reduce a time penalty on one speech/presentation (depending upon the severity of the infraction).
- Rewrite one assignment (not already an A- or above) within one week of it being returned.
- Make one "deal" with the instructor.**



Request (be Specific)

This card *may not* be used to:

- Change the date or time of an exam.
- Obtain a makeup exam.
- Obtain additional absences.
- Eliminate an attendance penalty.
- Eliminate a late-to/early-from class penalty.
- Receive credit for work done in another class.

This offer is subject to change without notice. Coupons must be redeemed at the time of use. This offer is non-transferable and carries no cash value. This offer does not apply to class penalties not listed in this document. The professor reserves the right to revoke this coupon at any time. Void where prohibited by law.

Name (print)

Signature

Date