

# *Communication Research and Auditing*

## **A-COMM 4323 Syllabus 3 credits Spring 2005**

**Instructor:** Dr. Sue Currey  
**Office:** 308 Holy Cross Hall **PHONE:** 428-1333  
**E-Mail:** nitac@admin.stedwards.edu **FAX:** 448-8767  
**Appointment Hours:** M: 2:30-4:30, T: 2:30-5:30 others hours by appointment  
(It's best to make an appointment, even for a time during regular office hours to be sure the teacher isn't seeing another student or attending a meeting at the time you would like to see her.)

**This syllabus is representative of the syllabi for this course. Contents may vary somewhat from semester to semester.**

**Course Description** This course provides a comprehensive, systematic study of how different organizations communicate at all levels. Issues are identified within the organization and strategies for addressing the issues are recommended.

**Textbook** Downs, Cal and Allyson Adrian. *Assessing Organizational Communication*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2004.

Recommended: You should have access to an introductory statistics study guide, text, or other source. This is not necessarily something you need to purchase. You may find something suitable on the web. Bookstores like Barnes and Noble usually have some quick-study paperbacks that might be suitable. The library will have several basic texts. You simply need access to a source that will help you think about some of the fundamental concepts involved in statistical manipulation.

There are two books on reserve (two hour) in the library under my name and this class. In the Goldhaber text, Chap. 10 has to do with communication audits. The other book is Hargie's *Handbook of Communication Audits for Organisations*. (It's British....thus the s in organizations.)

**Objectives.** Students completing this course will demonstrate:

- ✓ An understanding of the fundamental elements of quantitative and qualitative research;
- ✓ An understanding of general research design;
- ✓ The ability to design and implement a communication audit;
- ✓ The ability to design critical documents for data collection to support a communication audit;
- ✓ The ability to utilize colleagues and other resources to support the research endeavor;

# *Communication Research and Auditing*

- ✓ The ability to report the findings of a communication audit from the position of communication consultant;
- ✓ The ability to reflect and evaluate on the process of communication research.

**The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus as needed.**

## **Course Expectations**

- 1. The nature of this class requires that you become an independent researcher. It will be essential that you be very disciplined and stay on task. Because you will not be attending face-to-face classes regularly, you must establish a research timeline and be vigilant about sticking to it. Blackboard Q & A forums will be established to support you in your research effort; however, ultimately this is about you and your ability to execute a sizeable project by yourself while accessing available resources to enhance the quality of the project.**
2. Students are expected to become familiar with the course objectives and are responsible for working toward achieving them.
3. Students are expected to complete all assignments on time. Late assignments do not generally receive full credit. However, because of the variable nature of this project, students may negotiate alterations to their time line. Such negotiation must take place at least **two days** prior to the assignment due date, must be requested in **written form** to the professor, and must be needed **due to circumstances generated from the partner in the project over which the student has no control**. Assignments up to one week late of the original due date or the negotiated due date will be penalized 20%. Assignments will not be accepted beyond a week after the due date, barring exceptional circumstances. **The New College Incomplete Policy stipulates that Incompletes are granted at the sole discretion of the instructor, only in extreme circumstances, and when at least 50% of the work has been completed.**
4. During meetings with the professor and other students, either face to face or on Blackboard, the student should be prepared to discuss reading and related work to demonstrate mastery of the material.
5. All work should be presented in the most professional way; well written, word processed, and proofread. Be sure that your work always represents college-level learning. In academics, presentation is everything, particularly in this class. This is your opportunity to shine. **This element is particularly important in this course. The course offers you the opportunity to “act” in the professional capacity of communication consultant.**

## **E-Mail, Blackboard, and Technology**

You **must** either forward your SEU e-mail to an account you read daily or use SEU as your internet service provider and read that account daily. **The instructor will make no effort to contact you at a different e-mail address.** You should plan to check Blackboard and your e-mail at least once daily throughout the duration of the course. There will be lulls, but I rely heavily on the Announcement section of Blackboard and on

## *Communication Research and Auditing*

e-mail to get critical information to you. Though we can anticipate some technological glitches, technology is not to be used as an excuse for not having necessary information. **It is your responsibility to make sure you've read all of the announcements, course documents, and related e-mails.**

**All Organizational Communication majors should consistently read their SEU e-mail. Announcements regarding changes in the program, upcoming events related to the program, and news about Org Comm students will be disseminated via SEU e-mail.**

### **Academic Integrity**

The St. Edward's University *Undergraduate Bulletin* and the *Student Handbook* state that a student who is dishonest in any work may receive the maximum penalty of a mark of F for that course. Withdrawal from a course is not allowed when an F in the course for academic dishonesty has been imposed. Students caught committing academic dishonesty in this course will be subject to the full range of penalties as described in the *Undergraduate Bulletin* and in the *Student Handbook*.

### **Withdrawal**

Students are responsible for officially withdrawing from the course if they are unable to continue. After the official withdrawal date, students can petition for withdrawal through their CAP advisor. This must be done prior to the end of the course. **Students may be withdrawn from the course by the instructor for non-participation. Because this course is a very short blended course, non-participation is defined as failing to make contact with the instructor through the journal process, e-mail, telephone, or Blackboard for up to two consecutive weeks.**

### **Special Circumstances**

If you have a medical, learning, or psychiatric disability and require accommodations in this class, please let the instructor know early in the semester or as soon as you are eligible for accommodations. You will first need to present documentation of your disability to the Disability Coordinator located in Academic Planning and Support on the first floor of Moody Hall. In addition, APS provides tutors to assist you with study techniques and mastery of course content. Call 448-8660 for an appointment.

### **Computer Competencies**

All Undergraduate and New College students who entered St. Edward's University under the Fall 1999 catalog and later are required to satisfy the Computer Competency Requirement (CCR). The CCR modules comprise Introduction to Computers, Introduction to Email, Introduction to Netscape and the World Wide Web, Basic Library Research, Introduction to Word Processing, and Introduction to Spreadsheets. Students must satisfactorily complete a web-based test over each module in order to fulfill this

## *Communication Research and Auditing*

requirement. For more information about the Computer Competency Requirement, go to: [www.stedwards.edu/it\\_dept/competency](http://www.stedwards.edu/it_dept/competency) or call 464-8816.

**A word about the reading....** While we don't use all chapters of the text, you will find the book absolutely essential to your work as a communications specialist involved in assessments. This is a text you should **not** sell back to the bookstore. It is full of good material for the internal or external communications consultant. I've assigned some specific chapters for reading. However, I expect you to consider the text a reference book that will help you as you move through your project. Become very familiar with the contents of the book so that you can refer to it as needed throughout your project. Chapters other than those assigned may have significance depending on your individual project. As you move through your project, refer back to the text, any course materials I've prepared, and the materials on reserve in the library under this class and my name. The more you "do" the project, the more meaning these resources will have. Keep coming back to them over and over. Consider other texts that you've accumulated through your Org Comm studies as resources also.

**The journal – recording the process:** The journal is a very important part of this project. At the end of the project, your final audit report accompanied by a good journal should enable you to replicate this project in the future with little trouble and in half the time. The journal should reflect your personal experience as you find your way through the project. You will need to keep it on your computer, sending me weekly updates via Blackboard. (Send me only what's new each week. I may only comment on the journal if I think it needs to be more thorough. When the entire journal is delivered in the Appendix of the audit report, I may then comment more completely.)

You should plan to make entries in your journal **at least three times a week**. These do not have to be lengthy entries but should reflect the ideas that you wrestle with, the concepts that gain clarity as you move along, your hills and valleys as you work on the project. If you will keep in mind the purpose for the journal, the kinds of entries you will want to make should be clear. **Attempt to make three single-spaced entries each week, somewhere around a third of a page each. Each entry should be dated.** I depend on the journal to let me know your progress. **It is a critical piece of the project.**

The journal is not a document that will be graded for the writing...it can be just a stream of consciousness, free-writing exercise that allows you to express your thoughts about the process. Most research folks admit that their time to really reflect on **their** internalizing is limited and suggest a journal as a good way to better understand the nature of research and its related challenges. There is no right or wrong to the journal; it's simply your thoughts about your progress through the process. As Lance Armstrong wrote, "It's not about the bike." It's not about the project; it **is** about the process and understanding how you see yourself fitting into the process. Should you do a communication audit again, your journal will guide you.

## *Communication Research and Auditing*

**The Review Board:** You will participate in a Review Board team. Most researchers have colleagues who act as sounding boards, review drafts of survey questionnaires, or act as the devil's advocate, challenging their ideas. This is an important part of the process. You will find your Review Board members helpful as you try to bring focus and clarity to your project. **I ask that you interact with your Review Board members at least once during the duration of the class; they will help you test-drive your survey questionnaire.** If you wish to augment this, you can share telephone conversations, e-mails, or, upon request, I will set up a private section in Blackboard for your group. Past classes have found a face-to-face meeting early in the process effective. **I will expect you to reflect your Review Board activity in your journal so that I will know how and when you use your Review Board.** Even though you may be at different places in your project, meeting with your peers could help you refine concepts you don't understand. When you are in the survey development phase, having your Review Board members look at your survey can be a great help in shaping it.

**A word about the quiz...** The quiz is designed to check for understanding and will occur in the data collection and analysis stage. You will be notified via Blackboard when it will occur.

## *Communication Research and Auditing*

<u>Session</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading/assignments/assignments due</u>
<b>Week 1, 1/22-1/28</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Selecting a project</li> <li>▪ Laying the groundwork</li> <li>▪ Developing a partnership</li> <li>▪ Designing the research questions and proposal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Text, Chaps. 1, 2, 4</li> <li>▪ Goldhaber, Chap. 10 (optional but recommended; on reserve under my name and this class in the library)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2, 1/29-2/4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revising the proposal</li> <li>▪ Preparing a survey tool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Proposal due no later than 9 a.m., 1/31.</b></li> <li>▪ Journal submission <b>due 9 a.m., 1/31.</b></li> <li>▪ Text, Chaps. 6, 7</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3, 2/5-2/11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Refining the survey tool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Journal submission <b>due no later than 9 a.m., 2/7.</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Draft survey due no later than 9 a.m., 2/7 (must reflect ICA model or alternative ICA model)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Week 4, 2/12-2/18</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Calculating survey results</li> <li>▪ Data collection</li> <li>▪ Designing qualitative data collection methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review stats reference for calculating means, standard deviation</li> <li>▪ <b>Survey due no later than 9 a.m., 2/14 (must reflect ICA model or alternative ICA model)</b></li> <li>▪ Journal submission <b>due no later than 9 a.m., 2/14.</b></li> <li>▪ Text chaps. 5, 12</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5, 2/19-2/25</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assessing progress and reporting in</li> <li>▪ Qualitative research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Journal submission <b>due no later than 9 a.m., 2/21.</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Progress report due no later than 9 a.m., 2/21.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Week 6, 2/26-3/5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data analysis</li> <li>▪ Answering the research questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Journal submission <b>due no later than 9 a.m., 2/28.</b></li> <li>▪ Text, Chaps. 13, 14</li> </ul>
<b>Week 7, 3/6-3/12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing the audit report</li> <li>▪ Reporting research to colleagues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Peruse other chapters in the text as needed for developing recommendations for interventions.</li> <li>▪ <b>Presentations due. We'll determine in class how this will be done. Audit report will be due no later than 3/13.</b></li> <li>▪ Add sixth journal submission to completed journal in Appendix of audit report.</li> </ul>

# *Communication Research and Auditing*

## **Grading**

Project proposal which will contain time line (format in handbook)	<b>due 9 a.m. 1/31</b>	20 pts
Progress report (format in handbook)	<b>due 9 a.m. 2/21</b>	15
Development of at least two data collection mechanisms (One must be a survey instrument.) (20 pts x 2) First survey draft is <b>due 9 a.m. 2/7</b> . Final survey draft is <b>due 9 a.m. 2/14</b> . <b>Both data collection mechanisms will be evaluated when the audit report is evaluated.</b>		40
Final communication audit report (format in handbook) <b>Due TBA, last day of class.</b>		100
Final presentation (may be online)	<b>Last day of class</b>	10
Use of and participation in Review Board		10
Journal of process (6 weekly submissions x 5 pts.)	<b>due weekly</b>	30
Quiz (3 parts at 10 pts each)		30
Time/billing log	<b>Last day of class</b>	10
Attendance/participation at 4 meetings; may be face to face or online; determined by instructor. (4 x 10)		40
	<b>Total points</b>	<b>305</b>

90-100%	= A
80-89	= B
70-79	= C
69-69	= D