

COM 522 – Fall 2009
Professor Victoria J. Gallagher
Winston 103, Office Hours: W 10:00-11:30am
Office # 513-2430
Email: Vicki_gallagher@ncsu.edu

Critical and Cultural Approaches to Organizational Communication

This course is based on the following three premises: 1. Communication plays a primary role in the creation, development, and maintenance of organizations; 2. Organizational Communication functions primarily to enact cooperation and/or control; and 3. An organization exists in an every-changing context to which it must continually adapt if it seeks to exist over time. Given these premises, the purpose of this course is to explore the ways in which issues of value, power, and ethics come to the fore when complex organizations use communication to simultaneously initiate changes and maintain coherent identities over time.

The course is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on cultural and interpretive approaches to organizational communication – particularly those based upon theories of metaphor -- using the Morgan (1997) book and related articles as our guide. The second part focuses on an extended critique (the Deetz book) of “corporate colonization” – the extent to which corporations are co-opting individuals’ private and political lives – and related issues of power and ethics (articles). In this part of the course we will examine the ironies and limitations of the movement toward flatter, team-based, entrepreneurial, decentralized organizations; a trend that is often celebrated for its distinct advantages to the citizen-consumer and to the employee.

The course objectives are as follows:

1. Students will explore critical and interpretive approaches as they are used to achieve understanding of the role of communication in organizational processes, including socialization, leadership, values and culture formation, innovation, and identity formation and transformation;
2. Students will apply critical and interpretive methods to specific instances of organizational communication;
3. Students will determine both strengths and weaknesses of critical and interpretive approaches to understanding organizational communication

Course Texts

Stanley A. Deetz. (1992). *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization: Developments in Communication and the Politics of Everyday Life*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Gareth Morgan. (1997). *Images of Organization*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

An additional bibliography of related articles and books for use in assignments and final papers is attached at the end of the syllabus.

Course philosophy

This course is run as a seminar and thus the bulk of class time will be spent on discussion of course material, in-class exercises, and student-led presentations and discussions. Learning in a seminar format depends upon preparation and involvement by the students as well as the instructor. Therefore, it is very important that you not only read the assigned material, but also that you critically examine and interrogate it. The following questions should help you to do so:

1. What are the key arguments advanced?
2. How does this material fit in with other materials in the course as well as with relevant outside materials?
3. To what extent does this information and/or approach allow me to understand or illuminate real world circumstances? How does it apply to practical ventures/my own organizational experience?
4. What doesn't make sense to me? What does? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the approach taken in this reading?

To aid us in our discussions, we will reserve the first 10 minutes of each class period for class business. To participate in class business, you need to bring in newspaper clippings, ads, annual reports, brochures, newsletters, company policy statements, training videos, or any other artifacts you may run across that illustrate, contradict or in some other way speak to the issues raised in the readings for that night. Participation in class business will be included as part of your class participation grade— each student should plan to participate **at least** twice during the semester.

Assignments

In addition to class business, there are four graded assignments in the course:

1. **Interpretive analysis of organizational culture (15%)**. Using the template provided, students will provide an analysis of the culture of an organization of which they have been or are currently a member. Students must reflect on their findings drawing from the course textbooks as well as outside readings. The paper should be 5-7 pages in length, typed and double-spaced. Students will present their analyses orally to the class on September 28.
2. **Organizational Ethics reports (15%)**. Drawing upon the material presented in the Deetz book and related readings, students will explore an issue or practice related to organizational control. The report must identify the issue or practice, provide specific examples of it, and discuss the ethical dilemma(s) it poses. Finally, it must provide recommendations based upon the Deetz book and/or readings for how to deal with the issue or practice. These reports will be presented orally from an outline or note cards on November 9.

3. **Class Discussion Leader (15%).** You will be asked to lead class discussion for about one hour on a particular topic and related readings (the chapter(s)/readings assigned as well as external sources you choose). In order to lead this discussion effectively, you should go quickly beyond summarizing the reading to evoke discussion with key questions, insights, examples and provocations. For instance, you may address the theoretical assumptions, conclusions or practical implications of a reading. **An outline of your discussion plan (including key points as well as relevant quotes, etc.) should be submitted to me via email the day prior to your assigned class discussion date.** (15%)
4. **Final Paper (40%).** You will write a research paper representing an original effort to analyze a problem or position related to the core materials of this course. The paper may take one of three forms: a) a critical review of literature in an area related to the course topics; b) an argumentative essay; or c) a critical/interpretive/ethical analysis of a specific organization. The first option is most suited to the preliminary exploration of a topic, where you want to verse yourself in the research literature of an area or topic. The second option is most appropriate when you have a particular position or argument you wish to advance and defend. The third option is appropriate if you have access to the types of artifacts that would enable a rigorous metaphoric analysis or a thorough ethical critique. Regardless of the option you choose, the paper should be approximately 15 pages in length. You will present your work orally during class on November 23rd and 30th and receive feedback from the professor. Final papers are due the Tuesday of finals week, Dec 7th by 7:00pm. **NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

Class Participation and Attendance (15%). Due to the nature of the course, attendance at all class meetings is expected. However, if circumstances arise that make it impossible to attend class, you are granted two absences without penalty. For any unexcused absences beyond the allotted two, the professor reserves the right to significantly lower your grade. Per university regulations, excused absences must fall into one of two categories: 1) sanctioned anticipated situations and 2) document emergency situations. Anticipated situations (e.g., participating in official university functions, court attendance, religious observations, or military duty) **must be submitted in writing at the beginning of the semester or one week prior to the anticipated absence.** Emergency absences (e.g. student illness, injury, or death of immediate family member) **must be documented by Student Development or an attending physician** within one week following the emergency. Make-up work will be allowed only in situations where the absences are excused. If you miss class on a day you are scheduled to make an oral presentation, you will receive a zero for that assignment.

Please consult the following web page for further information on university attendance regulations: http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/academic_policies/attend/reg.html

Academic Integrity: Strict standards of academic honesty will be enforced according to the University policy on academic integrity found in the Code of Student Conduct. I expect that a student's name on any test or assignment means that the student has neither given or received unauthorized aid and that the student's work contains appropriate

citation of ideas and materials that are not his or her own. Consult the following website for further details: <http://www.fis.ncsu.edu/ncsulegal/41.03-codeof.htm>.

ADA Statement: Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students **at the beginning of the semester**. Contact information is as follows: 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653, http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm_action/dss/

Department Equity Statement: All persons, regardless of age, race, religion, gender, physical disability, or sexual orientation shall have equal opportunity without harassment in Department of Communication courses and programs. Any harassment should be reported immediately to either the classroom instructor or the department head.

Calendar of Topics and Assignments (The Professor reserves the right to make changes to this calendar – in consultation with the students – as dictated by class interests and needs).

Week 1

Aug 20

Course Introduction

Organizations: Structuring Our World Through Communication

Read: Morgan's Introduction (chpt. 1) and e-reserve article by Cheney with Lair (2005a)

Week 2

Aug 25 & 27

Reading Organizations

Mechanistic Approaches

Read: Morgan, chpt. 2 and e-reserve article by Putnam, Phillips, and Chapman (1996) (This chapter and the book it is in are available through the library as an ebook)

Week 3

Sept 1 & 3

Reading Organizations – Organization as Organisms and Brains

Read: Morgan, chpts. 3 & 4 and Cheney, G. (1983) *QJS* and *Communication Monograph* articles on e-reserve

Week 4

Sept 8 & 10

Reading Organizations – Creating Social Reality (Cultures)

Introduce Morgan analysis template

Read: Morgan chpt. 5 and e-reserve articles by Smith and Eisenberg (1987) and Cheney and McMillan (1990).

Week 5

Sept 15 & 17 Reading Organizations as Political Systems
Read: Morgan chpt. 6 and e-reserve articles by Kassing (2000) and Sivunen (2006)

Week 6

Sept 22 & 24 Reading Organizations: Psycho-Therapeutic, and Transformative Approaches
Read: Morgan, chpts. 7 & 8 and e-reserve articles by Scott, Corman, and Cheney (1998) and Scott and Fontenot (1999)

Week 7

Sept 29 Reading Organizations as Instruments of Power
Read: Morgan chpt. 9 and e-reserve articles by Barker and Cheney (1994) and McMillan (1990)

Oct 1 Reading Organizations through Metaphor and Culture
Read: Morgan chpts 10 & 11.
Presentation of Culture Reports

Week 8

Oct 6 **Presentation of Culture Reports**

Oct 8 **Fall Break – Relax and Enjoy**

Week 9

Oct 13 & 15 Critical Approaches: Ideology and Ethics
Read: Deetz, chpts. 1 & 2 and e-reserve article by Deetz and Mumby (1985)

Week 10

Oct 20 & 22 Critical Approaches
Community and Democracy through Communication Ethics
Read: Deetz, chpts. 3 & 4 and e-reserve articles by Deetz (1986) and Howard and Geist (1995)

Week 11

Oct 27 & 29 Critical Approaches
Community and Democracy: Language, Participation and Distortion
Read: Deetz, chpts 5-7 and e-reserve article by Knights and Morgan (1991)

Week 12

Nov 3 & 5 Critical Approaches – Corporate Communication and Power
Read: Deetz, chpts. 8 & 9 and e-reserve articles by Mumby (2004).

Week 13

Nov 10 **Ethics Presentations**

Nov 12 **NCA Conference – work on final projects**

Week 14

Nov 17 & 19 Ethics in Organizational Communication Practice
Community and Democracy in the Workplace

Read: Deetz, chpts. 10 & 11 and e-reserve article by Mumby (2005).

Week 15

Nov 24 Assessing Analytical, Critical and Interpretive Approaches
Imaginization and Workplace Democracy

Read: Deetz, chpt.12

Nov 26 **Thanksgiving Holiday**

Week 16

Dec 1 **Project Presentations**

Dec 3 **Project Presentations, Final Papers due**

COM 522 – Reserve reading bibliography

- Barker, J.R. & Cheney, G. (1994). The concept and practices of discipline in contemporary organizational life. *Communication Monographs*, 61, 19-43.
- Cheney, G. (1983). The rhetoric of identification and the study of organizational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 69, 143-158.
- Cheney, G. (1983). On the various and changing meanings of organizational membership: A field study of organizational identification. *Communication Monographs*, 50, 343-362.
- Cheney, G. and McMillan, J.J. (1990). Organizational rhetoric and the practice of criticism. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 18(2), 93–114.
- Cheney, G., Christensen, L.T., Conrad, C. and Lair, D.J. (2004). Corporate rhetoric as organizational discourse. In Grant, D., Hardy, C., Osrick, C., Phillips, N. and Putnam, L.L. (Eds), *Handbook of Organizational Discourse*. London: Sage, 79–103.
- Cheney, G. (with Lair, D. J.). (2005a). Theorizing about rhetoric and organizations. In S. K. May & D. K. Mumby (Eds.), *Engaging organizational communication theory and research* (pp. 55-84). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Deetz, S., & Mumby, D. K. (1985). Metaphor, Information, & Power. In Brent D. Ruben (Ed.), *Information & Behavior*, 1, 369-388.
- Deetz, S. (1986). Metaphors and the discursive production and reproduction of organization. In L. Thayer (ed.), *Organizations ↔ Communication: Emerging perspectives I* (pp. 168-182). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Co.

- Howard, L.A. & Geist, P. (1995). Ideological positioning in organizational change: The dialectic of control in a merging organization. *Communication Monographs*, 62, 110-131.
- Knights, D., & Morgan, G. (1991b). Strategic discourse and subjectivity: Towards a critical analysis of corporate strategy in organizations. *Organization Studies*, 12, 251-274.
- Kassing, J.W. (2000). Exploring the relationship between workplace freedom of speech, organizational identification, and employee dissent. *Communication Research Reports*, 17(4), 387-396.
- McMillan, J. (1990). Symbolic emancipation in the organization: A case of shifting power. In J. A. Anderson (Ed.), *Communication yearbook*, 13 (pp. 203-214). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Mumby, D. K. (2004). Discourse, power, and ideology: Unpacking the critical approach. In D. Grant, C. Hardy, C. Osrick, N. Phillips, & L. Putnam (Eds.), *Handbook of Organizational Discourse* (pp. 237-258). London: Sage.
- Mumby, D. K. (2005). Theorizing resistance in organization studies: A Dialectical approach. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 19, 1-26.
- Putnam, L.L., Phillips, N. & Chapman, P. (1996). Metaphors of communication and organization. In S.R. Clegg, C. Hardy and W.R. Nord (Eds), *Handbook of organization studies*. London: Sage.
- Scott, C. R., Corman, S. R., & Cheney, G. (1998). A structural model of identification in the organization. *Communication Theory*, 8, 298-336.

- Scott, C.R., Fontenot, J.C. (1999). Multiple identifications during team meetings: A comparison of conventional and computer-supported interactions. *Communication Reports*, 12(2), 91-100.
- Smith, R.C. & Eisenberg, E.M. (1987). Conflict at Disneyland: A root metaphor analysis. *Communication Monographs*, 54, 367-380.
- Sommerfeldt, Erich (2007). Building a social movement through public relations: A content analysis of Christian Right efforts to foster constituent identification via e-mail. Presented at the International Communication Association, 2007 Annual Meeting, 1-33.
- Sivunen, Anu (2006). Strengthening Identification with the Team in Virtual Teams: The Leaders' Perspective. *Group Decision and Negotiation*, 15(4), 345.
- Tompkins, E.V.B., Tompkins, P.K., & Cheney, G. (1989). Organizations, texts, arguments, premises: Critical textualism and the study of organizational communication. In W. T. Page (Ed.), special issue of the *Journal of Management Systems*, 1, 35-48.
- Willmott, H. (1994). Bringing agency (back) into organizational analysis: Responding to the crisis of (post)modernity. In J. Hassard & M. Parker (Eds.), *Towards a new Theory of organizations* (pp. 87-130). London: Routledge.

COM 522 – Additional Bibliography of Related Research

Barker, J.R. (1993). Tightening the iron cage: Concertive control in self-managing teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38: 408-437.

Boje, D. & Winsor, R. (1993). The resurrection of Taylorism: Total quality management's hidden agenda. *Journal of Organizational Change and Management*. 6:57-50.

Cheney, George. (1999). *Values at Work: Employee Participation meets market pressure at Mondragon*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Chiles, A.M. & Zorn, T. (1995). Empowerment in organization: Employee's perceptions of the influences of empowerment. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*. 23: 1-25.

Christensen, L.T. (1995). Buffering organizational identity in the marketing culture. *Organization Studies*. 16: 651-672.

Deal, Terrence E., and Kennedy, Allan A. (1982). *Corporate Cultures*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Deetz, Stanley. (1982). Critical and interpretive research in organizational communication. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*. 46: 131-149.

Deetz, Stanley. (1995). *Transforming Communication, Transforming Business: Building Responsive and Responsible Workplaces*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Driskill, Gerald and Benton, Angela Baird. (2005) *Organizational Culture in Action: A Cultural Analysis Workbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Du Gay, P. & Salaman, G. (1992). The cult(ure) of the customer. *Journal of Management Studies*, 29: 615-633.

Fairhurst, G. T. (1993). Echoes of the vision: When the rest of the organization talks total quality. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 6:331-371.

Fairhurst, G.T., Jordan, J.M. & Neuwirth, K. (1997). Why are we here? Managing the meaning of an organizational mission statement. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 25:243-263.

Harrison, T.M. (1994). Communication and interdependence in democratic organizations. In S. A. Deetz (ed.), *Communication Yearbook 17* (247-274). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

May, Steve. (2006). *Case Studies in Organizational Communication: Ethical Perspectives and Practices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Pacanowsky, M. (1988). Communication in the empowering organization, In J.A. Anderson (ed.), *Communication Yearbook 11* (356-379). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pacanowsky, Michael E. and O'Donnell-Trujillo, Nick. (1982). Communication and organizational cultures. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*. 46: 115-130.

Papa, M. J., Auwal, M.A., Singhal, A. (1997). Organizing for social change within concertive control systems: Member identification, empowerment, and the masking of discipline. *Communication Monographs*, 64: 221-249.

Pascale, Richard. (1985). The paradox of "corporate culture": Reconciling ourselves to socialization. *California Management Review*, 23: 26-41

Senge, Peter. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Groups, Inc.

Schein, Edgar H. (1992). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Smircich, Linda. (1983). Concepts of culture and organizational analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 28: 339-358

Stohl, C. (1993). European managers' interpretations of participation: A semantic network analysis. *Human Communication Research*, 20: 97-117.

Taylor, P.L. (1994). The rhetorical construction of efficiency: Restructuring and industrial democracy in Mondragon, Spain. *Sociological Forum*.

Wilkinson, A. & Willmott, H. (1995). *Making quality critical: New perspectives on organizational change*. London: Routledge.

Wilms, W. (1996). *Restoring Prosperity: How workers and managers are forging a new culture of cooperation*. New York: Random House.