

**COMST 214: Professional Communication**  
**Spring 2016**  
**Dr. Kelly G. Odenweller**  
**Iowa State University**

**TEXTBOOK:**

Adler, R. B., Elmhorst, J. M., & Lucas, K. (2013). *Communicating at work: Strategies for success in business and the professions* (11th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

**COURSE PURPOSE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to organizational communication theory and research and develop your communication competence in professional settings. The **specific learning objectives** of this course include:

1. Discuss the role of verbal and nonverbal communication in professional contexts.
2. Explain the communication skills necessary for developing and maintaining professional relationships, including listening, networking, and conflict management.
3. Identify cultural differences within the workplace.
4. Explain the role communication plays in intercultural competence and the benefits to embracing multiculturalism in professional settings.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of small group communication, leadership, and the components of effective meetings.
6. Understand the interview process, both as an interviewee and as an interviewer.
7. Develop and deliver professional presentations as an individual and a group.
8. Conduct self-assessments of one's professional communication skills and suggest ways to improve.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**1. In-class Activities & Quizzes.** Periodically throughout the semester, you will complete in-class activities or quizzes based on assigned readings and/or lecture material. These activities and quizzes will be group problem solving exercises or short, multiple choice quizzes that enrich your understanding of course concepts and prepare you for the exams. Each activity and quiz will be worth 5 points. At the end of the semester, I will calculate your top 10 in-class activities and quizzes for your total class engagement score of 50 points.

**2. Self-Assessment Papers.** You will write four 1-2 page papers assessing your professional skills and abilities in the topic areas of communication, leadership, interviewing, and presentations. The papers will be graded on how thoroughly you evaluate yourself on the assigned topic using relevant course material. Each paper will be worth 25 points.

**3. Exams.** Two exams will be administered to assess your ability to not only recall information presented in your readings and during class discussions but also apply course material to other

events, interactions, and situations. The exams will be comprised of 50 multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions for a total of 100 points.

**4. Individual Presentations.** You will present individually twice during the semester based on business presentations outlined in Chapter 12. For the first individual presentation, worth 25 points, you will prepare a 3–5 minute special occasion presentation in which you will choose to introduce a speaker, pay tribute to a person or organization, give a toast, give an award, or accept an award. For the second individual presentation, worth 50 points, you will prepare a 5-7 minute professional training or persuasive presentation. If you choose a professional training, you must choose a communication topic from your textbook (e.g., effective listening, inclusive language, developing peer relationships, conflict management). If you choose a persuasive presentation, you must choose a current events topic that affects professional workplaces/organizations or their employees/members (e.g., diversity, gender wage gap, salary negotiations, social media) and establish a position of which that you will work to convince your audience. Both training and persuasive presentations must include one research article, course content, verbal and visual support, and visual aids.

**5. Group Project & Presentation.** The purpose of this assignment is to deepen your understanding of course content and hone your leadership and group communication skills. You and four other classmates will identify one aspect of professional communication and investigate the importance of this topic in a specific professional context that corresponds with your major or career goals. Each group member will find one research article (published in a scholarly journal) and one professional article (published in popular press journal or newspaper) on your group's topic. Each group member will create an annotated bibliography for their two articles. Then, as a group, you will develop an interview protocol based on information you learned from your articles and any additional questions you have to develop a comprehensive presentation on your topic. Each group member will conduct a 10-minute interview with professionals in a relevant field/position to gather additional information about your topic. Once all of your data is collected, your group will develop a presentation outline, integrate verbal and visual support, and create visual aids (e.g., Prezi, PowerPoint, posters, pictures). Then, in a 12-15 minute presentation your group will present the findings from your research/professional articles and interviews. This project is worth 150 total points.

#### **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

| <b>Week</b> | <b>Topic</b>                               | <b>Reading</b> | <b>Assignment Due</b>                      |
|-------------|--|----------------|--|
| 1           | Introduction to Professional Communication | Chapter 1      |  |
| 2           | Effective Listening                        | Chapter 3      |  |
| 3           | Verbal & Nonverbal Messages                | Chapter 4      |  |
| 4           | Interpersonal Communication at Work        | Chapter 5      | <b>Communication Self-Assessment Paper</b> |
| 5           | Business Presentations<br><b>Exam #1</b>   | Chapter 12     |  |

|             |   |                       |   |
|-------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| 6           | Leading & Working in Groups               | Chapter 7             |   |
| 7           | <b>Individual Presentations #1</b>        |                       |   |
| 8           | Meetings                                  | Chapter 8             |   |
| 9           | Communication & Diversity                 | Chapter 2             | <b>Leadership Self-Assessment Paper</b>   |
| 10          | Interviewing                              | Chapter 6             |   |
| 11          | Negotiating<br><b>Exam #2</b>             | Marks & Harold (2009) |   |
| 12          | Preparing Presentations                   | Chapter 9             |   |
| 13          | Verbal & Visual Support for Presentations | Chapter 10            | <b>Interviewing Self-Assessment Paper</b> |
| 14          | Delivering Presentations                  | Chapter 11            |   |
| 15          | <b>Individual Presentations #2</b>        |                       |   |
| 16          | <b>Group Projects &amp; Presentations</b> |                       |   |
| Finals Week |   |                       | <b>Presentation Self-Assessment Paper</b> |