



## **Business & Organizational Communication**

BUSI-2080W-1 // Winter 2023, TTh 10-11.15 AM

**Instructor:** James Magnus-Johnston

PhD Candidate, McGill University; MPhil Economics, Cambridge University

[jmagnus-johnston@cmu.ca](mailto:jmagnus-johnston@cmu.ca) // "office hours" by appointment

c. 204.952.7751

### **Summary**

The course is designed to give students a broad overview of communication as it relates to the business environment: fundamentals of both written and oral communications are the foundation for this course. Students will develop techniques and practical methods for presenting ideas clearly and persuasively that should lead to sound decision-making and effective teamwork.

### **Objectives**

- To equip the student to write, speak, and curate organizational content
- Understand theories of organizational communication
- Craft brief messages

**Deadline for withdrawal** without academic penalty: March 20

---

## **Reading List**

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Organizational Communication (text), Zink & Zink  
(Granite State College Creative Commons)

HBR: 10 Must-Reads on Communication (text, kindle version)

*Supplementary texts and resources posted on the website*

---

## Assignments and Grades

Class participation (inc. attendance)	20%
Creations (in-class, ongoing)	30%
Presentation (ongoing)	25%
Final portfolio project	25%

Letter	Percentage	GPA	Descriptor
A+	90-100	4.5	Exceptional
B+	75-79	3.5	Very Good
B	70-74	3	Good
C+	65-69	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60-64	2	Adequate
D	50-59	1	Marginal
F	0-49	0	Failure

### An “excellent” assignment (A) would display:

1. Original thinking and a superior grasp of the subject matter
2. A highly developed capacity for critical evaluation, synthesis, and creativity
3. Appropriate descriptions and quotations
4. Organizing and subordinating information well; writing and/or speaking clearly
5. The use of research sources using *any* recognized style format. For reference, see:

Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. Eighth edition. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018

**Class participation:** Your participation grades will be posted at the middle and end of the term; each grade is worth 10%. You will be graded on the quality and quantity of interaction – that is, not only the volume of interaction, but the quality and thoughtfulness of your contributions. Attendance will also be factored into your participation grade and the instructor will regularly assess this by virtue of your posted creations and your peer evaluations.

**Creations (in-class):** At the end of each presentation, the instructor will pose a question for students to respond to in one of three processes: freewriting, interview questions, or a graphic (ie. a graphic social instagram post or a poster). Each class, you'll have to try a new approach. Students will have to maintain a repository (“portfolio”) of their creations in a shareable electronic document and will be encouraged to post them publicly on a blog or website. Be ready to share your work in class. The class will then offer critiques and revisions in an in-class exercise, which should be incorporated into the final portfolio product.

**Freewriting:** Write (on paper or on a computer) for 7-10 minutes non-stop on that topic. If you get stuck and don't know what to say next, write “I'm stuck and don't know what to say next...” or try asking yourself “what else?” until another idea comes to you. Do not concern yourself with spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Your goal is to generate as much as you can about the topic in a short period of time and to get used to the feeling of articulating ideas on the page. It's okay if it's messy or makes sense only to you.

**Journalistic interview questions:** Explore these questions as you respond to the topic/author: Who? What? Where? When? How? And Why? Think about your topic in terms of each question.

**Visual creation:** Consider first which shapes, colours, ideas, pictures, or sounds come to you in response to the presentation. Jot down some ideas on a page and then see if you can connect them in some way. Does one idea seem to sit above another idea? Can you make a diagram depicting the relationships between your ideas? While you're welcome to develop a graphic on-the-spot, your final product won't be required until you hand in your portfolio. Please note that memes require captions and explanations.

**Presentation:** For each chapter, students will prepare a presentation that summarizes the main argument of the reading in order to catalyze in-class discussion. Presentations are intended to be substantive, yet conversational. Those performing the summary will be asked to consider and summarize: the main argument/point; the sub-sections supporting the main argument/point; the implications and conclusion. Please also provide a critical analysis, including a series of questions to engage discussion. We will be asking for you to consider whether or not there was a problem with the author's argument. Is there something that wasn't considered? Questions should lead the class to defend/critique the reading and may be posed throughout the presentation or at the end of it. You will be graded by your peers, who recommend a grade to the instructor.

**Final portfolio project:** This project will require you to curate your 5 favourite selections, with written explanations (~100 words) of how your selections relate to our conversations. The portfolio will require you to organize the content using your own "brand." Guidelines will be posted for this process.

**Peer-assisted learning (PAL) and tutoring.** PAL is available for academic assistance in all of our programs. Please contact student advising for further details.

---

## Policies

**Final grades:** Grades submitted by instructors become final only after they are vetted by the Dean's Council. That process occurs early in January for fall semester grades and early in May for winter semester grades.

**Academic integrity:** *Academic Integrity*—All material referred to in any assignment MUST be appropriately referenced. Plagiarism is a serious matter. Students should be aware of CMU Academic Policies, particularly those regarding academic misconduct (plagiarism and cheating), which apply to all University courses. These are detailed on CMU's [website](#) and in the CMU Calendar. If you still have questions about appropriate referencing and what plagiarism is, a useful tutorial can be found [here](#). For more information on CMU policies regarding grades, academic misconduct, appeals, and other matters, please see CMU's *Academic Calendar*.

**Accessibility:** CMU strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with disabilities. If you are eligible for these services or have questions about becoming eligible, please contact Sandra Loepky, Coordinator of Accessibility Programs at [sloepky@cmu.ca](mailto:sloepky@cmu.ca) or 204.487.3300 x.340. In recognition of individuals with asthma, allergies and severe environmental/chemical sensitivities, CMU is striving to become a scent-free campus. Students, staff and guests are asked to refrain from wearing fragrances and scented personal care products at CMU. This includes perfumes, colognes, aftershave and scented hair products. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated by those affected.

**Academic support services:** Student studying, tutoring, and the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) program are offered to CMU students free of charge in the Marpeck Mezzanine.

**Counselling:** University students face many challenges and at times may benefit from having a trained professional to talk to. There are qualified counsellors at CMU who volunteer their services free of charge to students on the CMU campus. Students wishing to book an appointment with a counsellor are asked to contact the North Side Receptionist at 204.487.3300 or [info@cmu.ca](mailto:info@cmu.ca). Confidentiality is maintained at all times. The counselling office is located at C365 (north side) and is free for CMU students.

---

## Course schedule

*Live schedule available [here](#).*

			<b>From Organizational Communication*</b>				<b>From 10 Must-Reads</b>
			by Zink & Zink				by Harvard Business Review
Jan	M	10	Ch. 2 - The Critical Approach	W	12	Ch. 1 - Change the way you persuade	
	M	17	Ch. 3 - The Modern Organization	W	19	Ch. 2 - The science of persuasion	
	M	24	Ch. 4 - The HR School	W	26	Ch. 3 - The power of talk	
	M	31	Ch 5. - Orgs as Comm Systems	W	2	Ch. 5 - Is silence killing your company	
Feb	M	7	Ch. 6. - Comms, Culture, Organizing	W	9	Ch. 6 - How to become an authentic speaker	
	M	14	Ch. 7 - Power and Resistance at Work	W	16	Ch. 7 - Telling tales	
Reading break							
	M	28	Ch. 8 - Postmodern: Emotions, No-collar	W	2	Ch. 8 - How to pitch a brilliant idea	
Mar	M	7	Ch. 9 - Communicating Gender	W	9	Ch. 9 - The five messages leaders must manage	
	M	14	Ch. 10/13 - Difference at work	W	16	Ch. 10 - Taking the stress out of stressful convos	
	M	21	Ch. 11 - Leadership Comms + Crises	W	23	Watch video on crisis	
	M	28	Ch. 12 - Branding + Consumption	W	30	Ch. 14 - Comms, Meaningful Work, Identity*	
Apr	M	4	Conclusion				