

MKT 309: BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS (CRN #17419)
Spring 2018, Thursdays, 6:00 – 8:50pm, Bryan 117
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Professor: Cheryl Nakata, Ph.D.
Email: ccnakata@uncg.edu
Office: Bryan 348
Office Hours: Thursdays, 5:00 -5:45pm and by appointment

Graduate Assistant: Debbie Ocquaye Nortey
Email: daocquay@uncg.edu
Office: Bryan 348
Office Hours: Thursdays, 5:15-5:45pm and by appointment

Course Description

MKT 309 focuses on business and professional communications, specifically on teamwork, communication technology, verbal and non-verbal strategies, and innovation as a problem-solving context. The course is designed to develop effective persuasive, interpersonal, intercultural, and organizational strategies through business styles, formats, and presentations.

Prerequisites

Junior standing and admission to an approved program

Student Learning Objectives

These objectives are consistent with and support the mission of the Bryan School of Business and Economics. Upon successful completion of this course, students will...

1. Understand the importance of effective communication in the workplace
2. Identify communication strategies to business situations
3. Create responses to communication needs
4. Conduct business research for evidence-based writings and presentations
5. Use accurate documentation of sources
6. Write concise and organized documents using the appropriate format
7. Use the three-step writing process
8. Write reports based on evaluation of data
9. Develop and demonstrate effective oral presentations with verbal and nonverbal proficiencies
10. Understand the positive human capacities for deep insight, collaboration, and innovative problem solving
11. Develop skills to conceive, research, prototype, and design innovations using verbal, nonverbal, visual-figurative, and written forms of communications

General Education Writing Intensive Student Learning Outcome

Students will be able to write in genres appropriate to the discipline(s) of the primary subject matter of the course.

General Education Speaking Intensive Student Learning Outcome

Students will be able to speak in genres appropriate to the discipline(s) of the primary subject matter of the course.

The Bryan School of Business and Economics Mission Statement

In the Bryan School of Business and Economics, we create and disseminate knowledge about the theory and practice of business. In addition to our courses and research, we accomplish this through hands-on projects, global experiences, and outreach to the community. Our work produces principled leaders and exceptional problem solvers who have a global perspective, an innovative mindset, a broad understanding of sustainability, and a commitment to improve the organizations in which they work and the communities in which they live.

Common to all business students, students in this course will:

1. Implement the various steps of the critical thinking process, supported by the appropriate use of analytical and quantitative techniques, to formulate recommendations for subsequent decision-making
2. Apply appropriate ethical standards when making recommendations for business decision making
3. Evaluate business decisions in the context of sustainability goals, balancing environmental, social, and economic needs, conditions, and potential decision impacts
4. Formulate appropriate strategies, in the context of global issues and forces, to improve business performance in the world economy
5. Explain the roles of innovation and innovation management in achieving successful business strategies, decisions, and performance
6. Plan, schedule, contribute to, and lead projects

Course Format

The course teaches the essentials of effective business writing and speaking through individual and group work. Assignments are structured in relation to a hands-on innovation project to reflect an important business context as well as to cultivate the problem-solving and human capacity skills, knowledge, and mindsets useful for working in changing, challenging, and uncertain environments.

This is a Writing Intensive (WI) and Speech Intensive (SI) course directed at teaching students to write and speak in genres appropriate to business disciplines. As such, students are expected to revise and improve their work iteratively in accordance with the Three-Step Writing process, for both written and spoken assignments.

Students will be provided feedback on their assignments from the instructor, graduate assistant, and fellow students, and moreover are to *apply this feedback to improve all current and future assignments*. Ignoring feedback and failing to integrate the insights provided will result in diminished grades *and* subsequent feedback, i.e. comments will not be repeatedly made on the issues already noted as requiring attention and improvement.

To aid the learning process, a set of positive human capacity skills, mindsets, and practices called Human Flourishing will be cultivated to accompany the business communications content. These skills, mindsets, and practices will aid students in all business communications and innovation tasks, from the planning and revision of written and oral forms of communicating to the collaborating and problem-solving on innovation endeavors.

Required Materials

Writing That Works: Communication Effectively on the Job by Oliu, Brusaw and Alred, 12th Edition.

Students are encouraged to bring this book to class each week. They will also bring to class materials such as post-it notes, large worksheets, tape, and markers for team activities as instructed. Other readings may be assigned and if so will be posted on Canvas or handed out in class.

Students are expected to read the assignments *prior* to attending class per the syllabus. Not having done so will be evident and affect the quality of participation and thus course grade. The readings will be used or referred to during class, but not reviewed in detail in class under the assumption that the content has been digested outside of class. This is known as the flipped class method.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance of each class is mandatory. Two (2) unexcused absences, which include job interviews and illnesses, are permitted. *Additional absences without prior notification and consent of the instructor will result in a full letter grade penalty for the course.*

Students should arrive on time and remain through the class period. *Later arrival or early departure constitutes an absence and will be marked as such.* Punctuality is valued because business values it. *Students are responsible for signing in at the beginning of each session and will not be permitted to sign in once the session is completed* for any reason, such as having forgotten.

In general, quality (i.e. thoughtful) and quantity participation in class discussions is expected. Students will be graded on both aspects. Merely being vocal does not signify quality participation.

Classroom Policies

The Bryan School is a professional school dedicated to preparing students for careers in business. A proper classroom climate assists students in developing the skills that contribute to their future career success. These classroom policies promote and maintain a professional atmosphere in the classroom conducive for learning:

Students are to treat fellow students, the instructor, graduate assistant, and classroom guests with the utmost respect and courtesy by...

- Thoughtful listening and interaction
- Refraining from side conversations
- ***Muting and putting away all cell phones, pagers, tablets, and laptops upon entering class (none are not permitted for note-taking and can only be used in class upon instruction)***
- Not texting, reading a book, typing on a laptop or tablet or being on social media
- Arriving for class on time and leaving at the end of the designated period
- Respecting others' views that may differ from their own
- Using appropriate, professional language
- Supporting the instructor's ability to teach and other students' ability to learn
- Refraining from loud, distracting, aggressive behaviors and communications toward others (derogatory comments or threatening actions will not be tolerated)
- Not sleeping in class
- Conducting themselves in a courteous, attentive, and professional manner at all times
- Raising hands to make comments or ask questions

Students who cannot abide by these policies should consider not enrolling in the course. If necessary, students not complying with these policies will be asked to leave the classroom, possibly escorted by the campus police, and be subjected to actions under UNCG's student disciplinary procedures. The instructor

has discretion to withdraw a student from the course for disruptive behavior as outlined in Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom policy: <https://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/policies/disruptive-behavior-in-the-classroom/>

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to abide by the UNCG Student Code of Conduct and act with academic integrity as articulated in two weblinks: <http://sa.uncg.edu/dean/academic-integrity/> and <http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/student-code-of-conduct/>

In keeping with these policies, *evidence of academic dishonesty, including cheating on a quiz, will automatically result in a failing grade for the course and disciplinary review by the University. Cheating will absolutely not be tolerated.*

Plagiarism is also a form of academic dishonesty. It includes passing off someone else's work or ideas as one's own, or paraphrasing material from a source (e.g. the Internet) without proper acknowledgement and citation (whether from web or hard copy sources). Changing one or a few words from an original source can constitute plagiarism. *The instructor will use an electronic service to check for plagiarism on all assignments.*

To avoid plagiarism, do not copy chunks of material from your sources. You are expected to read the material, and then express the ideas in your own words while giving credit to the source. Plagiarism is such a serious offense it is grounds for expulsion from the University and can mar your academic transcripts and reduce prospects for hiring and graduate program admission. See the above weblinks or consult with the instructor before submitting any assignment if you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism. All cases of academic dishonesty will be vigorously pursued and brought before UNCG's student disciplinary committees.

Also not tolerated is passing off papers written for other courses as uniquely produced for this course. Courses are sufficiently unique in content to warrant distinct papers. The instructor can easily spot plagiarized papers (in part or in total) as well as papers written for other courses.

Furthermore, falsification of documents constitutes a violation of UNCG's academic integrity policies. Falsification includes forging another student's signature on a sign-in sheet, taking a quiz for another individual, re-using another student's assignment from previous semesters, and paying a service or another individual to write an assignment for you.

Disability Accommodations

UNCG is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that individuals with disabilities can fully access programs, courses, services, and activities at UNCG. Students with disabilities who require accommodations are to contact the Office of Accessibility Resources & Services at 336.334.5440 the first week of school and discuss arrangements with the instructor as soon as possible.

Communicating with the Instructor and Graduate Assistant

The best way to reach the instructor and graduate assistant is through email. It is imperative that the email be written clearly, politely, and in a timely fashion, as practice of the communications principles being taught in the course. There should be a subject in the subject line, a formal salutation and name (for example "Dear Dr. Nakata" rather than "hey"), and the request made with sufficient time to receive a

reply. Emails will not be responded to immediately but during normal business hours and usually within one to two business days, though the response may at times be slower as occurs in business.

All emails to the graduate assistant should be carbon copied or “cc’ed” to the instructor. Write your name at the end to formally close the email. Additionally, be mindful of the tone and language used in order to solicit a helpful response. Use of accusatory, volatile, or charged language will not solicit such a response, as is true in organizational life. Do not send emails through the Canvas In-box, as they may not be sent or received.

An alternative to emails is to attend office hours or request an appointment to see the instructor and/or graduate assistant at other times. Often a verbal or in-person exchange is faster and more effective in obtaining the needed information than a series of emails.

Under no circumstances will grades be negotiated, whether electronic or in-person, with the instructor or graduate assistant. The instructor has over thirty years of experience as a business communicator, including having published articles and books, and given business-related speeches to large and small audiences in the U.S. and abroad. The graduate assistant has worked professionally in marketing. Questioning the veracity of grades or expertise by which evaluations have been made will not be entertained. Only if a mathematical calculation is possibly erroneous should a question be raised.

Quizzes

Quizzes will cover the textbook, lectures, and any articles distributed by the instructor. Lectures will not exactly mirror the textbook. A total of two (2) quizzes will be administered throughout the semester. *The higher of the two quizzes will be used and count as the score for both.*

To ensure equity for the entire class, under no circumstances will make ups, alternative dates and times, or extra time be permitted for quizzes. If a student misses a quiz for any reason such as illness, the score for that quiz will be a zero. By default that that quiz score will be dropped, and the remaining quiz score used for both. If a student is tardy on a quiz day, no extra time will be permitted. As with work, it is best to be punctual.

Writing Assignments

There are three (3) individual writing assignments and three (3) group writing assignments. Two of the individual assignments require a draft and revised versions, so that students receive feedback and apply it to improve the document. Drafts are not graded, but are required. *Non-submission or late submission of a draft will result in a zero on the final or revised assignment.* In other words, it is not permissible to opt out of the draft and just turn in a revision, which is for all practical purposes unrevised based on feedback. The three group assignments are done as part of a larger project portfolio and are submitted only in final form.

All written assignments are to be submitted by the specified deadline as a MS Word document through Canvas (do not submit as a PDF). The project presentation will be submitted as a Power point file and the project portfolio may have an assortment of files as specified in class but must include MS Word documents as detailed later in the course.

The writing assignments are as follows:

- Individual Assignments
 - Draft secondary research report, with preparatory worksheet
 - Revised secondary research report
 - Solicitation letter, with preparatory worksheet
 - Draft executive summary of project
 - Revised executive summary of project
- Group Assignment
 - Project portfolio

Speaking Assignments

Students will prepare and deliver an individual oral presentation and a second individual presentation as part of a group presentation using PowerPoint. The latter presentation will be done in draft and final forms. The draft form is ungraded. As with the individual assignments in draft and revised forms, the draft is required and delivery of only the revised forms will result in a zero for the assignment. ***All presentations are PowerPoint slides submitted through Canvas.*** The specific assignments are listed below:

- Individual Assignment
 - Concept pitch
- Group Assignment
 - Draft project presentation
 - Revised project presentation

Innovation Project

Students will work throughout the semester on an innovation project as a means of learning to how to communicate, collaborate, research, problem solve, and design an innovation in a real-world context. Students will be placed into teams and required to develop an innovation for an actual organization. Although innovation is typically thought of as a new product or service, it can be any new or improved product, process, system, or model that addresses a market or operational opportunity or challenge.

The approach to innovation that will be taught is called *Design Thinking*, a relatively new method adopted by leading companies such as Google, Apple, Pepsi, and even the U.S. Marines. It can be used in any kind of organization, whether for- or not-for-profit, well established or new. The aim for students is to learn its methods, mindsets, steps, and tools in order to apply it to organizations they already are or will be a part of or support as volunteers.

The core components will be taught through the innovation project and business communications assignments. This way clarity, structure, insight, persuasion, and other key principles of impactful business communications, along with the ability to solve problems adaptively and effectively with others, are instilled in tandem.

Time will be given in class to work on the project throughout the semester, including assembling the group writing and presentation assignments. However, a good portion of the work will be done outside of class. At the end of the semester, student teams will assemble a project portfolio and present it publicly to the organization in both written and oral forms. The client organization will see how effectively students

conceive and deliver a targeted innovation as well as communicate the concept, design, and strategy of the innovation.

While the human flourishing skills, mindsets, and practices are intended to facilitate the business communications and innovation activities, both at the individual and group levels, teams will need to manage their own projects. Innovation is inherently an ambiguous endeavor in that the solution may not be obvious or easy to develop. Students will therefore learn agility, collaboration, problem solving, and resilience (handling setbacks) along the way. Where severe dysfunction occurs, teams will have the option to remove a member under specified conditions. Teams have significant authority to manage their affairs, and thus opportunity to learn how to lead.

A member who is voted out will have no replacement assignment or recourse with the instructor as the decision made by the group is final. This situation reflects the real world of business, where uncooperative and unreliable individuals are terminated from employment. The details of the group removal process will be provided in class. Members will also grade each other as input for the instructor, such that there may be variance in grades among members on any team assignment.

Grading

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|--|------------|
| Individual Writing Assignments (2 graded) | 25% |
| Individual Speaking Assignments (1 graded) | 10% |
| Group Writing Assignments (1 graded) | 25% |
| Group Speaking Assignments (1 graded) | 15% |
| Quizzes(2 graded, 1 dropped) | 15% |
| Participation | <u>10%</u> |
| Total | 100% |

The course grading scale is below:

A+ = 97-100%, A = 93-96%, A- = 90-92%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 83-86%, B- = 80- 82%, C+ = 77-79%, C = 73-76%, C- = 70-72%, D+ = 67-69%, D = 63-66%, D- = 60-62%, F = 59% or below

Again, grades are non-negotiable. Assignments can take 6 – 12 business days to grade and/or provide feedback on. Feedback will be more detailed in earlier than later assignments in the semester, and will not be repeated within an assignment or on future assignments if the same errors are made. This situation (of repeated errors) will be pointed out as such, and the student is encouraged to self-correct once the error is noted.

A cautionary (and possibly discouraging) word about writing: It is hard. It is difficult to write (and speak) well because writing is not mechanical. Unlike math where 1 + 1 always equals 2, writing is both a creative and intellectually rigorous enterprise, so the parts do not always sum to a good whole. It is assumed that students already know the fundamentals of grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation (if not please get a hold of Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style* as well as read carefully the Appendices in the textbook).

The greater difficulty of writing lies is in mastering the presentation of ideas in a coherent *and* persuasive fashion. This usually takes rewriting over and over and over and over again, perhaps until becoming nauseous. It also requires being a naïve reader, i.e. as if you are not the writer and are running across these ideas for the first time. It is especially challenging to detach yourself from your own thoughts and words in order to perceive them from the vantage point of another person, akin to a body snatchers’ experience.

However, this self-critical gaze is the only way to learn to write well. In this course, we will learn about mindfulness, which is likely to help.

The old adage practice makes perfect applies, but be aware that a lot of effort does not necessarily translate into a good piece of writing since the ultimate judge of quality is a discerning reader, in this case your instructor and graduate assistant. Put another way, though you may toil many hours to write a single paragraph and in the end still receive severe criticism and a low grade for it, you are nonetheless learning. Hence this is not an easy A or B course. In business, the best communicators achieve that status through relentless practice. They have learned to produce cogent reports and slam dunk presentations by discerning their audiences (e.g. C-suite executives) and presenting their ideas in logical yet emotionally connecting ways. These skills propel their careers regardless of function, including in accounting and finance, where the most successful individuals have both superb technical and communications/relational abilities.

Late Completion Policy

Late submissions for any individual or group assignment will not be accepted. A zero or F is given if a graded assignment. If not a graded assignment, then the late submission automatically results in a zero or F on the final graded assignment.

Other Information

Students should use and check their UNCG email addresses to access and send information or questions to the instructor and graduate assistant. Do not assume that your personal email address is known or used to send you information.

Students are advised to read this syllabus carefully to understand course parameters. ***Receipt of this syllabus constitutes acknowledgement of the policies and requirements of the course, and therefore attempts to negotiate special deadlines, assignments, or policies will not be entertained.***

If a student anticipates the course assignments to be incompatible with work and class schedules or other time demands and interests, s/he is strongly advised to enroll in another course. Assignments are consistent with university coursework.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to Change, 1/8/18)

| Date | Chapter/ Other Reading | Subject | Quizzes/Individual Assignments | Group Assignments/ Project Portfolio |
|------|------------------------------|---|--|--|
| 1/11 | 1 | -Course Overview -Business Communications Fundamentals | | |
| 1/18 | 2, 3, 4 | -Human Flourishing, Pt. 1 -Writing Strategy -Methods for Writing Strategy | | |
| 1/25 | 6, 7 Appendix B | -Human Flourishing, Pt. 2 -Secondary Research | Teams Formed by Instructor | |
| 2/1 | Brown, Hoyt & Sutton | -Guest Speaker: The Innovation Project -Design Thinking as Innovation | Secondary Research Draft with Worksheets Due | |
| 2/8 | 5 | -Collaborative Writing -Writing the Project Brief | | |
| 2/15 | 8, 9 | -Writing Solicitations -Conducting Primary Research | Secondary Research Revision Due | |
| 2/22 | 13 | -Writing Proposals | Quiz 1 | Secondary Research Due ¹ |
| 3/1 | | -Speaking on Your Feet -Ideating Concepts, Pt. 1 | Solicitation Letter w/ Worksheets Due | Design Brief Due |
| 3/8 | SPRING BREAK | | | |
| 3/15 | 14 | -Writing & Delivering Presentations -Ideating Concepts, Pt. 2 | | Primary Research Due |
| 3/22 | | -Presenting Concept Pitches -Selecting Concepts & Prototyping | Concept Pitch Due | Concepts Due |
| 3/29 | 11 | -Writing Formal Reports -Prototyping & Testing | Executive Summary Draft Due | |
| 4/5 | | -Synthesizing Content -Selecting and Launching Solutions | Quiz 2 | Prototypes Due |
| 4/12 | | Draft Project Presentations | Executive Summary Revision Due, Individual Part of Draft Presentation Due | |
| 4/19 | | Final Project Presentations | Individual Part of Revised Presentation Due | Complete Project Portfolio Due ² |
| 4/26 | | NO FINAL EXAM | | |

¹ This submission and each subsequent one before the complete project portfolio submission is a synthesis of team members' work into a 1-page summary. All data, figures, etc. are to be attached behind the 1-page summary to form one section of the Project Portfolio. Attachments in each section are limited to 10-pages, except for the Prototype section, which has a 20-page limit for attachments. Details to be provided.

² Includes table of contents, executive summary, section summaries (all five of them), design brief assembly, secondary research assembly, primary research assembly, concepts assembly, prototypes assembly, **and** final prototype and launch strategy (in electronic form, in clearly labeled sections and inclusive of data, visual media, and PowerPoint presentation slides). Details to be provided.