

Seminar in Communication Processes (COMM 5820)
Communication in Virtual Environments
M 6:00-8:50; GAB 301

Instructor: Iftekhar Ahmed

Office: 320A GAB

Office Phone: 940-565-2819

Email: Iftekhar.Ahmed@unt.edu

*Office Hours: M 2:30 PM – 4:30 PM, W 2:30 – 3:30 PM, and by appointment**

*It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to schedule an appointment outside of office hours with me, and give me at least 48 hours advanced notice of needing a meeting.

Course description

This is a graduate level survey of the concepts and research of virtual environments. Recent technological developments have enabled us to utilize virtual communication with ease and accuracy, and with that we see a wave of development of virtual organizational activities and also virtual organizations. However, concerns over the effectiveness of virtual teamwork and interaction remain. Scholarly interest in the functional, social, and psychological processes of virtual teams and organizations has produced a significant number of research and theories.

This course will be taught in a seminar fashion. This seminar will introduce theoretical and pragmatic issues that constituted on-going conceptual debates of the field. The course is designed to introduce the origin and development of the field, as well as current literature, theories, and research. We will discuss various aspects related to the study of virtual environments – decision making processes in organizations, computer supported work, virtual teams, virtual organizations, and virtual communication and collaboration.

This course is a seminar. Students are expected to complete their readings of each class in advance and participate in class discussions. The goal of this course is to:

- familiarize participants to the history of the field
- introduce key theories and on-going conceptual debates
- introduce common methodological approaches, alternative approaches, and possibilities
- future directions of virtual organizational communication research and practice

Readings

There is no text-book for the course. Required readings for each session are mentioned in the daily schedule section. Articles and book chapters will be made available for checkout and photocopy. Majority of the readings are also available online through academic databases.

Course requirements

Course journal: Each student is required to maintain a course journal. The objective of the journal entries is to record your reactions and pose questions that you think important for the understanding of the topic of discussion. You are required to do session readings in advance and

write down your reactions and concerns in the journal. You are required to submit the journal before we start the session. Your journal will count towards 10% of your course grade.

Exams: There are two exams for the course (a midterm and a final), each carrying 20% of your course grade. Exams will be take-home in nature, consists of short questions, definitions, and essay questions.

Seminar paper: Your 15-20 page seminar paper will require you to analyze a virtual environment. You can choose one of the following paths for your seminar paper: analysis of a virtual organization, compare different models of virtual organizations, analyze virtual organizational cyberinfrastructure or national policies related to cyberinfrastructure and virtual organization development. The paper will follow APA writing style and formatting. Some additional reading will be required for the paper. It is advised to meet me early (3rd or 4th week of class) and discuss your topic of interest. We can decide on additional readings based on your topic choice and research questions. A first draft is due after our 9th class session. Final version of the paper is due on December 5, 2012 through e-mail to my official e-mail address. I will notify you upon receiving your submission no later than December 6, 2012. Detail organization of the paper and possible topics will be discussed in the 2nd week of class (09/17/2012). Your seminar paper counts towards 50% of your course grade.

General Course Policies

Attendance: Attendance in this course is vital to your grade. Class sessions will employ case readings and application of content material. Students should come prepared to discuss the readings and the cases. Hence, it is important that students keep up with the readings.

Submissions: All submissions need to be typewritten (8.5 X 11 letterpage, 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, 1 inch margin all sides). Graphs, charts, tables, pictures, and illustrations will not count within the mentioned page limits.

Access Policy: The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112—The Rehabilitation Act as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. Therefore, we cooperate with the university's Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to provide reasonable accommodation. Students who wish to self-identify should register with the ODA no later than the second day of classes.

Library Copier: Students conducting research in the Communication Studies Library associated with departmental coursework have access to a printer/photocopier located in the office adjacent to the library. We encourage students to make use of this resource to print research accessed

online in the library or to copy essays from any of the department's holdings. Students may not use this resource for other purposes, such as printing courses assignments, class notes, scripts, etc. Students who use the copier for uses other than those outlined above will lose copying privileges.

Code of Student Conduct:

All persons shall adhere to the Code of Student Conduct regarding academic dishonesty, including acts of cheating and plagiarism

Cheating. The willful giving or receiving of information in an unauthorized manner during an examination, illicitly obtaining examination questions in advance, using someone else's work or written assignments as if it were your own, or any other dishonest means of attempting to fulfill a requirement of this course.

Plagiarism. The use of an author's words or ideas as if they were your own without giving proper credit to the source, including but not limited to failure to acknowledge a direct quotation.

Policies and procedures regarding adjudication of acts of academic dishonesty are available in the UNT Policy Manual at <http://www.unt.edu/policy/>

Student Behavior: Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr

Incompletes: In accordance with university policy, grades of "Incomplete" will be awarded only in circumstances where students have completed 75% of the coursework for the semester with a passing average and the grade is warranted by a medical or military excuse. Inability to complete coursework in a timely manner does not constitute an acceptable or appropriate reason for requesting an incomplete.

Course Evaluations: The SETE evaluation for this course will open Monday, November 29th, and will close Friday, December 17th at 5:00 p.m. To complete the evaluation go to either www.sete.unt.edu or your my.unt.edu account for complete instructions.

Disclaimer: This syllabus should not be considered a binding contract on the part of the instructor, who reserves the right to change any aspect of the course without prior notice.

Daily Schedule

Introduction to virtual environments

9/10/2012

Life in the network: The coming age of computational social science

A twenty-first century science

Intimations of a new order

Virtual organization

Changing forms of organization and work

9/17/2012

Keys to strategic organizational communication

Computer-supported cooperative work: History and focus

Group decision support systems

9/24/2012

The future of work

Electronic communication and changing organizational forms

Introduction to the special issue: Communication processes for virtual organizations

10/1/2012

What do we really want?

Two scenarios for 21st century organizations

Team, Task, & Technology

10/8/2012

Capturing the complexity in advanced technology use: adaptive structuration theory

Technology acceptance model

Technology adaptation: The case of a computer-supported inter-organizational virtual team

Virtual teams

10/15/2012

Virtual teams

A typology of virtual teams: implications for effective leadership

Virtual teams: Technology and the workplace of the future

10/22/2012

Bridging space over time: global virtual team dynamics and effectiveness

The mutual knowledge problem and its consequences for dispersed collaboration

Leadership effectiveness in global virtual teams

Communication and trust in global virtual teams

Grid and cyberinfrastructure: Research, knowledge management and virtual environments

10/29/2012

The anatomy of the grid

From wires to partners: How the internet has fostered R&D collaborations among firms

Virtual scientific teams: Life-cycle formation and long- term scientific collaboration

11/5/2012

Developing an e-infrastructure for social science

Integrating cyberinfrastructure into existing e-social science research

Cyberinfrastructure for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

11/12/2012

Reconfiguring access to information and expertise in the social sciences: the social shaping and implications of cyberinfrastructure

Building partnerships among social science researchers, institution-based repositories and domain specific data archives

Social informatics data grid

Network perspective

11/19/2012

Network structure in virtual organizations

Network strategies of organizing

Cyberinfrastructure policies

11/26/2012

Final Report: NSF SBE-CISE Workshop on Cyberinfrastructure and the Social Sciences

Our Cultural Commonwealth: The report of the American Council of Learned Societies

Commission on Cyberinfrastructure for the Humanities and Social Sciences

Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure (selected sections)

Strategic vision for UK e-infrastructure

Methods

12/3/2012

Measuring Collaboration and Transdisciplinary Integration in Team Science

Collaboration: What Makes It Work (selected sections)