



Business Communications

BUS 798 — Fall 2020

Class Dates: October 28 – December 18 — Online Course

Instructor Information

Instructor: Andrew Soderberg
Email: soderbea@uwosh.edu
Office Location: Sage 2455 (my house in Neenah this semester)
Office Telephone: (920) 424-0199
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 9:40-11:10am, or by appointment

Required Materials

Heinrichs, J. (2017). *Thank You for Arguing (3rd Edition)*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
ISBN: 978-0-8041-8993-4

Course Description

Students will learn and develop skills that will help them become more effective in their communication and relationships with others in the workplace. Topics addressed include communication and influence strategies, conflict management, managing work teams, and critical and creative thinking. Students will also be given the opportunity to develop their skills at making formal presentations.

This course introduces you to best practices in business writing and business speaking. Such skills are exceedingly important to advancing your career. Course objectives include learning to organize and write informative, negative, and persuasive business messages; to construct effective arguments using paragraphs and sentences that demonstrate rhetorical relationships; to understand and use style techniques that result in efficient prose; to structure presentations efficiently and effectively; to incorporate stories, visuals, logic, and emotion into business presentations; to integrate slides, handouts, notes, and questions; and to deliver information with a natural confidence.

This course will introduce you to the importance of effective communication skills and will provide the opportunity for you to put them into practice through in-class discussions, group projects, and writing assignments. These projects provide the opportunity to examine and improve in communication areas, making you more effective in professional settings.

Course and Program Objectives

This course is designed to help students achieve the following College of Business Learning Goals for the MBA (*note*: the approved learning objectives for the UW Oshkosh MBA Program are on the last page of this syllabus):

Leading Organizations

- Develop collaborative communication skills, including strategies for running effective meetings and for collaborating across distances and time zones. Employ principles of effective group communication to cultivate trust and understanding, increase open participation, and strengthen decision making in work groups and teams

Communicating Organizational Issues

- Apply business communication strategies and principles to prepare effective communication for domestic and international business situations
- Apply and use rhetorical strategies relevant to business communication
- Compose and revise accurate business documents using computer technology
- Communicate efficiently and effectively via electronic mail, Internet, and other technologies
- Design and deliver a persuasive presentation that convinces the audience of the topic's relevance and overcomes resistance, using appropriate visual support and adhering to a specified time limit
- Analyze a company's communication processes or key messages and recommend changes that can help advance communication as an integral part of that organization's management strategy
- Write an effective persuasive memo that convinces the audience of the topic's relevance and overcomes resistance, using appropriate visual support and adhering to a specified space limit

General Policies & Information

Academic Misconduct

- Honesty and integrity is expected of all students. Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. As a UW Oshkosh student, it is your responsibility to be informed about what constitutes academic misconduct, how to avoid it and what happens if you decide to engage in it. Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to):
 - Plagiarism (turning in work of another person and not giving them credit)
 - Stealing an exam or course materials
 - Copying another student's homework, paper, exam
 - Cheating on an exam (copying from another student, turning in an exam for re-grading after making changes, working on an exam after the designated time allowance)
 - Falsifying academic documents

Please refer to UWS Chapter 14 (University of Wisconsin Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures) for information on academic misconduct (see website at <http://www.uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/university-policies-procedures/academic-misconduct>). Pay particular attention to UWS 14.03 (definition of academic misconduct) and UWS 14.04 (disciplinary sanctions). Please note that all incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to the appropriate university authorities.

It is not acceptable for two or more students to work together and turn in the same work unless the assignment is specifically a group assignment. In the case of a group assignment, groups are treated as a unit and the sharing of work between groups is not permitted. Plagiarism is defined as the use of another's work without attribution. It is acceptable to use a published solution to a particular problem if the solution's source is documented. If you are using material from a published source or an organization's internal documents, that source must be documented or referenced. If proprietary materials are utilized, appropriate permissions must be obtained.

Accessibility

- The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. It is the University's policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements.

Students are expected to inform Instructors of the need for accommodations as soon as possible by presenting an Accommodation Plan from either the Accessibility Center, Project Success, or both. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared Instructor and student responsibility.

The Accessibility Center is part of the Dean of Students Office and is located in 125 Dempsey Hall. For more information, email accessibilitycenter@uwosh.edu, call 920-424-3100, or visit the [Accessibility Center Website](#).

Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

- UW Oshkosh is committed to providing the safest campus possible for our students, faculty and staff. Students experiencing any form of prohibited discrimination or harassment, including but not limited to sex or gender based violence, can report it by contacting Equal Opportunity, Equity & Affirmative Action/Title IX office (920-424-1166), or Dean of Students office (920-424-3100). If you choose to contact one of these offices, your information will be private but may not remain confidential. You may also call the Campus Survivor Advocate (920-424-2024) for confidential help and resources. You can also find more information on policies and resources at <https://uwosh.edu/titleix> and <https://uwosh.edu/hr/policies-procedures> and <https://uwosh.edu/equity>.

Please note that I am a responsible employee for UW Oshkosh and therefore have an obligation to report incidents of sexual violence and misconduct that are brought to

my attention to the Title IX Coordinator. For more information about my reporting requirements visit <https://uwosh.edu/titleix/employee-responsibilities>. Under Executive Order 54, I am a mandatory reporter and also have an obligation to report child abuse/neglect.

Repeating / Dropping Courses – Financial Aid Impact

- Dropping a class after the 10th day and repeating courses can have a negative impact on your eligibility for financial aid. Students need to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to be eligible to receive aid. Details about this federal policy can be found at this link: <https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/process/sap/>

Students Right to Know

- Students are advised to see the following URL for disclosures about essential consumer protection items required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990: <https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/consumer-information/>

Course Requirements and Activities

Requirements for this course include the following and will be evaluated as follows:

Activity	% of Total
Weekly Papers (7)	70
Online Discussion Participation	100
Reading/Class Preparation	30
Video Presentation	20
Total	220

Grading

- The grading scale for this class is as follows:

A = 93 - 100% A- = 90 - 92.99% B+ = 87 - 89.99%
 B = 83 - 86.99% B- = 80 - 82.99% C+ = 77 - 79.99%
 C = 73 - 76.99% F = < 73%

Weekly Papers

- These are due by **11:59pm on Wednesday** of each week (except during weeks 5 and 6 the due dates are pushed back to Friday instead of Wednesday). You will need to submit these online via Canvas. In general, papers should be **two (2) single-spaced typed pages, 1" margins, 12-point font**. Two pages includes anything > 1.5 and < 2.5 pages. You are welcome to use headings, but do not use excessive spacing between headings to create additional length. And yes, it is good to write concisely, but submissions that do not meet the minimum of at least 1.5 pages will not earn full points. *Note: Pay attention to the weekly commentaries to find (in some cases) additional direction for weekly papers.*

Paper 1 – After reading through the UWO Library search guide, find a research article that is relevant to your business and summarize it. Most of the summary should be in your own words, but your summary should include **BOTH** paraphrases and direct quotations from the article so you can practice citing both correctly using APA format. Conclude your summary with a correct list of citations (i.e., reference list) using APA format.

Paper 2 – Download and complete the grammar and spelling exercise sheet. This may be an easy assignment, but be careful because it may not be as easy as you think it should be. You might know most of these grammar rules, but it never hurts to check them again. I also want you to see that there are very good grammar guides online. It might not hurt to bookmark one of them to use at work!

Paper 3 – There are many speakers we could choose, but people frequently reference Steve Jobs’ “Think Different” speech. You can access it using the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=keCwRdbwNQY>. Since the final assignment for this class is for you to do a presentation, now would be a good time to make a list of the advice you think Heinrichs is trying to give, and then check to see how well Jobs follows that advice. This assignment has two parts: 1) describe at least three of the traits, techniques, ideas, suggestions, tools, etc. that Heinrichs recommends for speakers, and 2) describe how well (or poorly) Jobs follows those particular characteristics **by providing specific examples from the speech to illustrate your claims**. Close with a comment or two about what you hope to remember and/or focus on as you prepare your own speech.

Paper 4 – Download “Collision Course: Selling European High Performance Motorcycles in Japan” (www.iveycases.com), product number: 9B12M025. It will cost you \$4.25, but I think you will find it an interesting read. In your paper, make sure to hit these main points: 1) What is Hofstede telling us about this culture (not just Japan in general, but **also** about the specific culture/situation described in the case)? Be sure to highlight connections between Hofstede and the case by **providing examples from the case** that illustrate some of Hofstede’s points. 2) Can the computer system be redesigned to work in this culture? If so, how? If not, why, and what do you propose as a solution?

Paper 5 – With luck, you have already worked with strong teams that have created expectation/team contracts. If so, hopefully this will help you on this assignment. If not, no worries as you’ll get a chance to do so now. Your task in your small discussion groups is to create a template that you think would be good to use to grade the final presentation for this class (based on the criteria for this presentation as indicated in the syllabus).

To help you organize your efforts as a team, you need to create an expectations document (i.e., team contract). This document should describe things such as how you will communicate as a team, who will be in charge (and how), who is responsible to do what and by when, consequences for not meeting expectations, etc.

To evaluate how well and thoroughly each team member participates and contributes in completing this assignment, you must also create a peer-evaluation form. This will allow

you to rate each other generally, as well as in terms of how well each group member adheres to and upholds their part of the responsibilities as outlined in your expectations document. Once created, fill out and complete an evaluation for each member of the team, including yourself.

Each person will submit three documents: 1) a template to grade the presentation, 2) an expectations document, and 3) a completed peer-evaluation form. Note that #1 and #2 will be the exact same document for everyone in the team, and the only difference with #3 will be the actual evaluations that each person provides to rate themselves and each one of the team members, but the evaluation form itself will be the same for everyone. **Combine all three of these documents into a single file and upload only this one file.**

Paper 6 – For this paper, I will be pairing you with another person from the class and asking you to negotiate with each other. One person will play the role of a job recruiter, and the other person will play the role of a job candidate. You can choose between the two of you how to negotiate (ex. via email, Skype, phone conversation, in person, etc.), but make sure to tell me what method you end up using. Make sure that you arrange to negotiate early enough in the week so that you will give yourselves enough time after the negotiation to write paper 6. Once you complete your negotiation, each person needs to fill out the final contract, sign it yourselves, indicate your total number of points, and submit this form with your paper. You do not have to send it to each other so that you both sign the same copy, but please share with each other your total number of points so you can calculate the overall total number of points.

To complete paper 6, download the negotiation feedback template in Canvas and use it to provide **detailed** feedback regarding the style, strengths, and weaknesses of the person with whom you negotiated. Provide constructive feedback concerning his or her behavior and tactics **using specific examples from your negotiation**. Feedback should be insightful and thorough. I recommend that you take notes soon after the negotiation so that you can provide specific details and examples. **This feedback may be shared with this person!** This part should be one full page. For the second page, reflect on your experience and talk about what you learned about effective communication in the specific setting of a negotiation.

Final Paper/Presentation

- **Paper 7** – It is time to apply Heinrichs and the rest of what we have learned into your own presentation! You are to pretend that you are persuading some group in your company of something. It can be a new budget item, the best way to pursue a project, the best way to handle a personnel problem, a great new product or service that the company should launch, changing shift schedules...you pick it. Help me to understand the situation by describing the company, its culture, and the argument you are trying to make. Then tell me the elements from the class that you think are most relevant for this presentation, and **describe how you attempt to utilize/implement these skills** that you have learned in class to persuade your audience during your presentation. You should be **deliberately using techniques, skills**, etc. to incorporate elements that will enhance the effectiveness of your use of *ethos, logos*,

and *pathos*. Don't forget that *pathos* is important, even if the group you're presenting to is not an "emotional group". This paper may exceed the 2.5 page limit if necessary.

Presentation – Prepare and deliver a videotaped presentation where you will be presenting to me (your actual audience) but pretending to be presenting to your intended audience as described in your paper. You may use PowerPoint slides or other appropriate visual aids if you wish, but don't just add your voice to a set of slides; you need to be personally visible in the video. Make sure that the sound on the video is loud enough for me to hear you clearly. The grading of the presentation is based on the following criteria:

- How persuasive you are during your presentation
- How well you utilize/incorporate material and/or techniques from the class during your presentation
- Your overall effectiveness in your presentation (e.g., maintaining eye contact, avoiding filler words like "um" and "uh", not reading from slides and/or notes)
- How well you keep your presentation between 4-8 minutes long

The paper is due on the regular weekly paper schedule. The video should be uploaded in the Canvas folder by **11:59pm Thursday, December 17, 2020**.

Class Participation

- As graduate students and working adult learners, you are an important resource for each other's learning. Not being present in the full group or the small group discussions and/or not participating in activities, assignments, etc. are all a drain on the learning value of your investment and that of others. It is expected that you are completing the assigned readings, contributing actively and thoughtfully, **reading the posts of others**, being respectful of others' contributions, etc. Your participation will be evaluated based on the following criteria.
 - **Reading/Class Preparation** – Completing the assigned readings on time.
 - At the end of the semester, you will be expected to provide a [self-assessment](#) of your reading preparation for each class period (5 points each). You will give yourself a grade somewhere between 0 and 100 (0=did not read anything, 100=read everything on time) that will determine what percentage of the 30 points possible you receive.
 - **Online Discussion Participation** – I don't like discussion boards that use the total number of posts as a measure of engagement...these discussions too easily tend to degrade into a lot of chitchat with very little substance ("I agree!"). I don't mind the short and quick responses back and forth since sometimes those are meaningful to those participating in them, but in thinking about **substantive** comments, my preference is for fewer posts per person, but with more thoughtful and relevant content, and on a more predictable schedule. Although I will not put a word or line minimum on **substantive** comments, **a sentence or two is usually not enough!** Be sure to put enough

thought and effort into your posts to make them meaningful. Examples from your own experience are great, current events can often be interesting...I think you get the idea. Although you can engage in as much of the “other” discussion as you want, here is what is expected regarding the more **substantive** comments:

- **Tuesday:** Post a **substantial** original response to the discussion topic.
- **Wednesday–Thursday:** Post a **substantial** response to someone else’s original post. This may include an elaboration, a counter example, etc.
- **Friday:** Post a **substantial** reply to someone who responded to your own original post.

This schedule results in at least three (3) **substantial** posts each week, with as much “other” posting as you want. Also with this schedule, you are welcome to post earlier if you so desire. For example, if someone posts their **substantial** response to your post on Wednesday, you are welcome to post your **substantial** reply back to them on Wednesday as well...you don’t have to wait until Friday.

Each discussion post is worth 4 points. One point is earned or lost based on whether the post was on time (1=yes, 0=no). The remaining 3 points depend on the quality of the post (please see the sample rubric posted on Canvas to help give you an idea of what differentiates lousy, good, and great discussion posts—it is located under Week 1 on the page titled “Weekly Online Discussion Participation”). In general, a score of 0 means there was no post; a 1 means that it was not a substantive post; a 2 means that it was an average post but not much engagement; a 3 means that there was good substance to the post.

During weeks 1 and 7, we will have an all-class discussion where we’ll post for and read from the posts of everyone else in the class (see below for the slightly different schedule during these 2 weeks). During weeks 2-6, discussions will be in small groups of 4-5 students led and summarized by a discussion leader.

- **Week 1:** You will still make three posts this week, but modified from the schedule as outlined above as follows:
 - **1. Introductions** – Everyone will make an introduction post in which you will help us get to know you better, both professionally and personally. Please include information about where you are working, your previous experience, your goals and aspirations, etc. It would also be nice to hear about your hobbies, interests, general background, etc. as well. You be the judge about what and how much to share. I believe that a big part of your MBA experience is in networking and building relationships with each other, and this will help in building those connections. You are welcome to post a video introduction

if you would like. These should be posted (i.e., are due) by 11:59pm *Tuesday* (11-3-20).

- 2. Topical Discussion – Your original post to the weekly discussion topic should be made by 11:59pm *Wednesday* (11-4-20).
 - 3. Response to Another’s Post – post your response to someone else’s original post by *Friday* (11-6-20).
- **Weeks 2-6:** These discussions will be held within your small groups. A **discussion leader** will lead and summarize each of these discussions. The **discussion leader** role will rotate each week so that everyone in the group will be the discussion leader at least once. It will be the group’s responsibility to coordinate this **discussion leader** rotation and ensure that everyone leads the discussion at least once. The **discussion leader** participates in the group discussion according to the schedule above (**don’t forget to make your own original and reply posts**), but has the following **additional** responsibilities:
- Rather than selecting only one post to respond to during the *Wednesday-Thursday* schedule, meaningfully **respond to each group member’s original post** to facilitate the sharing of further insights and ideas.
 - By *Friday* night, compile a summary of key points and highlights from your group’s discussion. You don’t have to wait for everyone to make their individual replies (since those are not due until Friday night). Since the rest of the class will not have read any of your group members’ posts, this is the chance to share those things that you have learned and that were meaningful to your group during the week’s discussion. Try to not just summarize what each person says, but try and integrate across the group members’ posts to highlight takeaways that are related to the topic, but that are unique because of your group’s discussion. Post this summary to Canvas in the small group discussion summaries section for that week.
 - The extra posts required to respond to every other group member’s posts as well as the group discussion summary post result in the additional twenty (20) discussion leader points.
 - If your group does not have exactly 5 people, it will be the group’s responsibility to make sure that everyone gets the chance to be the discussion leader at least once, and determine how to handle the “extra” week if applicable.
- **Week 7:** This will be an all-class discussion week where you will respond according to the regular schedule throughout the week.

Online Discussion Topics

Week	Online Discussion
1	<p><u>Logical Arguments</u> Talk about an example of a fight or an argument that you have either observed or participated in (as defined by Heinrichs). What caused it to be the one and not the other? What was the end result? ...Was it beneficial? ...Counterproductive? Why?</p>
2	<p><u>Decorum</u> In pages 47-56, Heinrichs describes “decorum.” Provide an example from your organization either of someone (could be yourself) using decorum well or using it poorly. How did people react? What lesson did you learn?</p>
3	<p><u>Workplace Emotions</u> When have you seen the influence of emotions in interactions between employees at your company? What emotions were involved? How did emotions affect those involved?</p>
4	<p><u>Cultural Considerations</u> Pick a country and review its cultural characteristics. Compare it to the US. Which characteristic might influence your approach to workplace communication with them? How might you adjust? Have you had any experiences where any of these characteristics have come into play?</p>
5	<p><u>Shared Writing</u> The “reading” for this week is to watch the video <i>12 Angry Men</i>, which illustrates an example of people communicating in a group setting. This example may not necessarily be representative of all instances of group communication, but choose some part of the video that illustrates an element of group communication that you have experienced. Highlight the connection between the example from the video and your personal example of either good or bad group communication.</p>
6	<p><u>Negotiation</u> Think of a time when you have been involved in a negotiation. Were you successful? Why or why not? How might this experience have been improved? (or what led to its successful conclusion)?</p>
7	<p><u>Personal Takeaway</u> The hope is by now that you’ve learned something from what you’ve read or from what somebody has said. Describe one of your personal “takeaways” from this class and explain why this was meaningful to you.</p>

Course Outline

****Note that the schedule below is subject to change.****

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
Week 1 (Oct. 28 -Nov. 6)	- Fundamentals of Rhetoric - <i>logos</i> - Scholarly Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding business research Citing sources 	- <u>Heinrichs</u> : p. 15-32 p. 38-46 p. 110-112 p. 120-123 p. 131-132 - Week 1 Commentary	- Introduction (due 11-3-20) - Paper 1 (due 11-4-20) - All class discussion #1
Week 2 (Nov. 9 - 13)	- <i>ethos</i> - Avoiding Common Grammar and Spelling Errors	- <u>Heinrichs</u> : p. 47-83 - Week 2 Commentary	- Paper 2 (due 11-11-20) - Small group discussion #1
Week 3 (Nov. 16 - 20)	- <i>pathos</i> - Using Persuasion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persuasive presentations 	- <u>Heinrichs</u> : p. 84-103 p. 268-273 p. 280-299 (optional, but recommended) p. 303-318 - Week 3 Commentary	- Paper 3 (due 11-18-20) - Small group discussion #2
Week 4 (Nov. 23 - 27)	- Cultural Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National culture Organizational culture 	- <u>Hofstede</u> - <u>Tommasi case</u> (Product # 9B12M025) - Week 4 Commentary	- Paper 4 (due 11-25-20) - Small group discussion #3
Week 5 (Nov. 30 - Dec. 4)	- Communication in Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tools and processes to manage shared tasks Pulling diverse styles (and quality) into one document 	- 12 Angry Men (video) - Week 5 Commentary	- Paper 5 (due 12-4-20) - Small group discussion #4
Week 6 (Dec. 7 - 11)	- Organizational Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiations 	- Negotiation Checklist - Week 6 Commentary	- Paper 6 (due 12-11-20) - Small group discussion #5
Week 7 (Dec. 14 - 18)	- Negotiation Debriefing - Stand and Deliver <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Videotaped presentation plus written explanation of background and rhetorical approach chosen 	- Week 7 Commentary	- Paper 7 (due 12-16-20) - Video presentation (due 12-17-20) - All class discussion #2 - <u>Self-assessment</u> (due 12-18-20)

MBA Program Learning Goals and Behavioral Objectives

	In the category of	Graduates will possess the skills necessary to	And be able to
1	Leading organizations	Establish organizational goals and develop approaches for achieving those goals through socially responsible and ethical decisions in a variety of contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate strategic organizational contexts (for example, managing innovation, managing talent and succession planning, managing in a crisis) and establish corresponding action plans • Describe a culture that inspires socially responsible and ethical individual and organizational behavior and develop methods to motivate goal achievement • Identify different influence tactics and evaluate their applicability to a given setting
2	Managing organizational strategy	Develop, manage, and execute strategy to achieve organizational objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique, assess, and/or develop the organizational vision, mission, and objectives (i.e., the strategic plan), with attention to relationship building among stakeholders and managing diverse perspectives and objectives • Identify performance measures to assess progress toward achieving strategic objectives • Allocate resources to strategic initiatives necessary to close gaps between current and desired strategic outcomes • Adapt strategy, objectives, and operations to changing opportunities.
3	Solving organizational problems	Make effective resource allocation decisions to solve complex problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe, clearly and succinctly, an organizational problem and the desired outcome of problem-solving activity • Apply appropriate quantitative analysis as evidence of the existence of a problem • Select and implement appropriate decision-making techniques for a given problem • Develop and evaluate alternative courses of action to resolve the problem • Select preferred course of action and define implementation plan
4	Communicating organizational issues	Communicate complex business issues in a precise and succinct manner for the purpose of informing, persuading and/or engaging the communication recipient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present information in a focused and well-organized manner suited to the intended audience • Develop persuasive, defensible arguments in support of a managerial position
5	Managing organizational resources	Develop and work within a systems view of the organization and its areas of functional expertise	<p>Describe the ways in which the following contribute to organizational success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost management • Financial management • Financial reporting • Human resources management • Information systems • Organizational behavior • Marketing • Supply chain and operations management

Revisions approved by COB Faculty on May 4, 2017