INF 659/COM 659:
TECHNOLOGY & CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE
CLASS# 8720/CLASS # 7768

FALL 2008
THU 4:15-7:05 PM
ROOM 209, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
UPTOWN CAMPUS, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION
Dr. Senem Güney

Center for Technology in Government
187 Wolf Road, Suite 301
Albany, New York 12205
Phone: 442-4473
Email: sguney@albany.edu

OFFICE HOURS
Thu 2:30-4:00 p.m. (Uptown Campus), and by appointment

INTRODUCTION
This course examines today's work experience of participating in "virtual organizations"—that is, organizations whose members are distributed across space, different time zones, and social-cultural boundaries. It relates to some fundamental issues of communicating and organizing through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in these distributed work settings. Our general objective in this class is to explore what it means to participate in the social/communicative life of organizations whose boundaries are no longer limited to a building, to a region, to a country, or even to an easily definable community. With this objective in mind, we will organize our discussions around the role of ICTs in today's world of work and investigate the implications of our growing reliance on ICTs for social/communicative action in contemporary organizational life. Our examination of how ICTs are transforming the workplace will be focused on questions like:
- What are the new challenges of leadership for managers of distributed work settings?
- How does the growing use of ICTs influence the ways organizations create and manage knowledge?
- What are the challenges against effectiveness in virtual teams?
- What is the new range of media for business communication? How do these new media enable and constrain interactions and redefine communication norms in the workplace?
- What is it to be "at work" these days? How fuzzy are the boundaries between work and nonwork?
- What are some of the challenges, risks, and opportunities that influence organizational life in the "information economy"?

OBJECTIVES
After taking this course, students should be able to:
- Know and understand how the use of ICTs is defining contemporary organizational life
- Recognize, analyze, and evaluate the different effects of ICTs on communicative and organizational practices

- Apply theories of communication and organization to real life experiences of working with ICTs and have an informed understanding of the possibilities and constraints that they create.

I hope to help you meet these objectives through creating a learning environment where you develop:

- Problem-solving and critical thinking skills as you engage with the class material in class discussions and activities
- Verbal and written communication skills as you engage in class discussions and activities, give class presentations, and work on written assignments
- Research skills as you work on short paper assignments.

READING MATERIAL

In this course, we will be reading a list of articles. You can pick up a package of these articles from Mary Jane Books near the downtown campus, on Western Avenue at Quail Street.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Participation/attendance—Part A (40 points—8%)

Regular attendance and prepared participation are essential for making any class a successful and enjoyable experience for all the participants. This class is no exception to that rule and will require your informed and enthusiastic participation in class discussions and activities. You are expected to complete reading assignments before class and come to class prepared to demonstrate your engagement with the class material—which should *not* be understood to be limited to speaking up when the professor asks a question. Some examples of classroom behavior that show students' engagement and efforts to participate include asking clear questions, giving comments on specific arguments, offering clarifications for interesting observations from the readings, and relating a class concept to personal experience to improve everyone's understanding of the material. Missing class more than once, getting into a habit of arriving late or departing early, and not investing enough time in working with the readings will adversely affect our class dynamic and your grade. You are always welcome to ask for my feedback on your participation or my consultation about any aspect of the class throughout the semester.

Participation/attendance—Part B (10 @ 4 points each for a total of 40 points—8%)

For this portion of your grade, besides showing up enthusiastically for class, you will turn in one or two paragraphs (typed or hand-written, printed on paper or on a coffee-shop napkin—on the condition that the printing be legible) based on your thoughts, reactions, confusions, or discussion-stimulating questions about the reading material for *ten times* during the semester. On a scale of 0-4 points for this assignment, a 4-point grade means "well-done," 2 means "need to show more thoughtful engagement with the material," and 0 means "not satisfactory."

Reading outline and discussion leading (2 @ 60 points each for a total of 120 points—24%)

For this assignment, you will help lead our class discussion on *two pieces,* which you will select from the *required reading list of articles*. (Please note that you can make your selections only from the list of articles, and not from the book chapters.) On the days when we will be discussing the article(s) you selected to fulfill this assignment, you will come to class with a short outline of the reading of your choice. If you email me your outline a day before class, I will be happy to make copies for everyone. Otherwise, you will be responsible for bringing enough number of copies with you to class. Your grade for this assignment will be based on the comprehensiveness of your outline and your effort to engage our class members with your thoughts, observations, and reactions—rather than the length of your outline or your presentation.

Paper assignments (3 @ 100 points of each for a total of 300—60%)
You will write *three short papers* where you will demonstrate your understanding of the reading material and you will apply some theoretical concepts from our readings and discussions to reflect upon and analyze a given situation that relates to the use of technology in organizational life. Each paper will be 6 to 8-pages long. I will hand out and/or post on BLS specific questions for you to answer in your write-up and I will provide instructions to help you with these assignments before due dates. I recommend everyone to arrange meetings with me to go over questions about their written work.

Option for Ph.D. students:
Ph.D. students can choose to write *one short paper* and then write a *project proposal in two-stages* in an area of their interest. Specific guidelines for these assignments will be discussed before due dates. For this option, the written assignments will be composed of:

Short paper #1	(max. 8 pages)	100 points
Research question & annotated bibliography	(7-10 references)	100 points
Project proposal write-up & presentation	(max. 13 pages)	100 points

Your final grade will be based on a scale of 500. The grading scale will be as follows:

Grade	Points
A	500-475
A-	474-450
B+	449-430
B	429-415
B-	414-400
C+	399-385
C	384-370
E	369-0

LATE/MISSED WORK, ABSENCE, AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY
Please consult the Graduate Bulletin and go to
http://www.albany.edu/grad/requirements_general_admissions.html#academic_standards) for the criteria to be considered to receive extensions for late work and to understand what counts as excusable absence. "Computer problems," for example, no longer qualify as reasonable excuses for late work in the 21st century. You will need to provide documentation and talk to me—at least one week in advance—for your late work or absence to be excused. The Graduate Bulletin also provides information regarding cheating, plagiarism, or disruption of class. Please read this information and understand that your failure to comply with the University's published code of student conduct shall result in disciplinary penalties that range from failing a class assignment to dismissal from the University.

I reserve the right to alter this syllabus with timely notice to students. I will announce any changes in class and/or post them on BLS in sufficient time to avoid misunderstandings.

Date	Topic	Readings/Assignments
8/28	Course introduction	
9/4	Foundational issues in the study of organizations, communication, and technology	**1.** (Orlikowski & Yates, 1994) **2.** (Zammuto, Griffith, Majchrzak, Dougherty, & Faraj, 2007) **3.** (Reinsch, Turner, & Tinsley, 2008)
9/11	Leading across boundaries	**1.** (Huxham & Vangen, 2000) **2.** (Vangen & Huxham, 2003) **3.** (Zhang & Faerman, 2007)
9/18	Dealing with knowledge—Practice perspective	**1.** (Brown & Duguid, 2001) **2.** (Orlikowski, 2002) **3.** (Swan & Scarbrough, 2005)
9/25	Dealing with knowledge—Communities and networks of practice	**1.** (Vaast, 2004) **2.** (Ormrod, Ferlie, Warren, & Norton, 2007) **3.** (Vaast, 2007) **Short Paper #1 due** *Recommended:* (Wenger & Snyder, 2000)
10/2	Dealing with knowledge across boundaries	**1.** (Cramton, 2001) **2.** (Carlile, 2004) **3.** (Sapsed & Salter, 2004)
10/9	*No class*—Yom Kippur	
10/16	Interorganizational collaboration—What, why, and how	**1.** (Hardy, Phillips, & Lawrence, 2003) **2.** (Christiansen & Vendelø, 2003) **3.** (Hardy, Lawrence, & Grant, 2005)
10/23	Collaborating across boundaries—Effects of media and distance on interactive processes	**1.** (Olson & Olson, 2000) **2.** (Maruping & Agarwal, 2004) **3.** (Wilson, O'Leary, Metiu, & Jett, 2008)

10/30	Collaborating across boundaries—Go-live!	**Class exercise**—Loc: LSRB
11/6	Collaborating across boundaries—Trust, control, and team dynamics	**1.** (O'Leary, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2002) **2.** (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999) **3.** (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000) **Short Paper #2 due**
11/13	Collaborating across boundaries—Conflict	**1.** (Hinds & Bailey, 2003) **2.** (Hinds & Mortensen, 2005) **3.** (Güney, 2006)
11/20	Technology and boundary management in organizational life	**1.** (Wallace, 2004) **2.** (Fleming & Spicer, 2004) **3.** (Golden & Geisler, 2007)
11/27	*No class*—Thanksgiving	
12/4	Wrap-up, project presentations, and discussion on trends for the workplace of the future	*Food-for-thought reading:* (Fitzgerald, 2007) (Schalch, 2007) (Villano, 2008)

 Short paper #3 will be due to Dr. Güney's email sguney@albany.edu on ***Thursday December 11 by 6:00 p.m.***

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