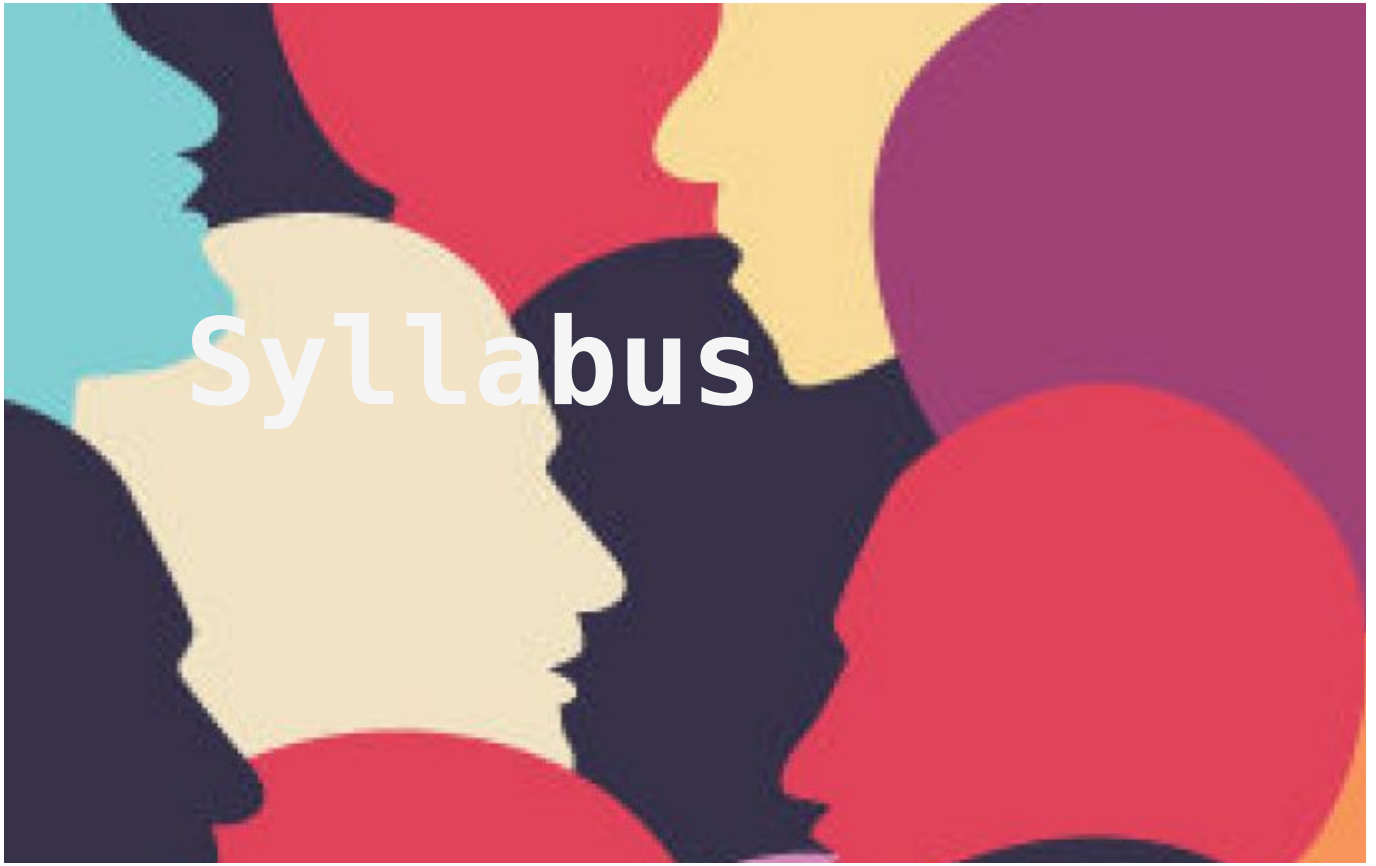


Syllabus Fall 2026



Intro to Graduate Studies in Strategic Communication

- [Course Contents](#)
- [Literature](#)
- [Grading](#)
- [Policies](#)
- [Tentative Course Outline](#)

Course Contents and Objectives

The main goal of this course is to introduce our graduate students to the discipline of communication and the subfields

of strategic communication: public relations and organizational communication. They need to learn, first of all, the critical and analytical skills that are necessary for success in graduate education. Research methods and the most common writing styles will be discussed in the course.

Furthermore, the course offers an in depth analysis of the role of theory and research in social sciences in general and communication studies in particular.

History is an essential component of the course, as well. We will, first, analyze the early history of communication studies, a necessary step to understand the development in the discipline, and then focus on the particular history in the academic and professional fields of strategic communication (both in the external and internal tracks).

The theoretical section of the course deals with the model for developing communication campaigns to address internal and external audiences. We will also discuss the basics of persuasive communication research, since strategic communication can be regarded as a persuasion industry.

The Introduction to Graduate Studies in Strategic Communication also explains the nature, content and structure of our program. Students should become familiar with the two main tracks within the program. Strategic communication is divided in our department, both at graduate and undergraduate level, in internal and external emphases. In the internal communication track, also known as organizational communication, students learn how to deal with audiences that are considered constituents of the organization (employees, donors, stakeholders, ...), while the external track focuses on audiences that do not belong to the organization (customers, media, legislators, ...).

Finally, the course also incorporates a reflection on the subject "Ethics and Communication". Communication, above all when supported by mass media, might become a powerful weapon. We will discuss some ethical gray areas and basic standards in the field of professional communication.

Objectives

1. To develop writing, researching and critical analysis skills necessary for success in graduate education.
 2. To introduce students to the discipline of communication, and the sub-fields within strategic communication: public relations and organizational communication.
 3. To introduce the student to the role of theory, research and practice as fundamental to graduate studies in general and communication studies in particular.
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Course's Structure

This Introduction has three main sections. During the first weeks of the semester (1 to 5), we study our academic field, strategic communication, and the main features of our Master's program. This section is taught by Jose Carlos del Ama.

In the second section, weeks 6 to 9, the course focuses on the internal track of the program: Organizational Communication. Becki Louys takes over this second phase.

Finally, the last weeks of the term (10 to 14), José Carlos del Ama introduces the external track of the program: The professional field of Public Relations.

Literature

This online introductory course is reading intensive. In this Web-site you will find all the readings you need to success in

the course. The course contents are organized in three different categories: Online Lectures (HTML documents or audiovisual files) Readings (mostly PDF documents) Streaming Media (videos). Still, you may consider buying this style guideline:

[Style Manual for Communication Studies](#)

Bourhis, J., Adams, C., & Titsworth, S. (any edition). Style manual for communication studies. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Again, information contained in this book will be available in Blackboard Learn. However, I recommend the book because its contents may be helpful for you during your graduate studies and beyond.

Grading

Grading in the class will be based on a number of elements. They are

1st Exam (Introduction, Weeks 1-5)	15%
2nd Exam (Org Comm, Weeks 6-9)	15%
Organizational Study	10%
Case Study	30%
Participation	10%
Final Exam (Cumulative)	20%

Organizational Study

Two pages evaluating the potential usefulness of organizational approaches, the most and least valuable for use in an organizational study.

Case Study

You will have to write a case study, worth 20% of your final grade. You can focus on any of the topics covered in the course. It could be a historical case, a crisis situation or any of the application fields discussed in the learning units. We suggest you share your ideas with the instructor before making the final decision about the topic. You must follow APA style guidelines to format the paper.

The structure of your case study should cover following items:

1 – Definition of the situation:

Why was communication necessary?

2 – Strategy:

Definition of the strategic goals of the campaign, the particular target audiences and the channels used to reach them.

3 – Communication:

How were the outreach tools created and the messages delivered?

4 – Evaluation:

To which extent was the campaign effective

You should be able to write this paper in 10 pages (Times New Roman, 12-point, double-spaced).

Participation

Each Student is expected to participate in the online discussion forums that will appear every week in the corresponding folder in the course's main menu. The participation grade will be based on the regularity of your participation and the quantity and quality of your entries.

This grade is relative, the more active the group is the more you will have to participate to reach a high grade.

Examinations

There will be three exams in this course. The first exam covers the contents of the online lectures, readings and audiovisual materials of the first five weeks of the term. The second exam focuses off the Organizational Communciation section of the course. Both exams will be available for three days (Friday through Sunday), but you have only three hours to complete it.

The last week of the classes, the final exam, which is cumulative, will be published. You have one week to complete three essay questions related to the contents of the whole course.

Policies

Please Note: The instructors reserve the ultimate right to modify the schedule of activities, assignments and tests for the class as it deems necessary. In addition, the professors reserve their rights to assess the overall ability of the students to meet the expectations of the course and will exercise their right to pass or fail the student accordingly.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be graded so you receive feedback, but will be worth only half credit (100 pt. paper receives 50 points). This is a severe penalty; it is not fair to others who met the deadlines if we accept yours late. The instructor will not accept any assignment more than one week late. In online course, computer problems are no longer reasonable

excuses for late assignments. The instructor suggests becoming familiar with the Blackboard Learn environment as soon as possible and scheduling ample time for the assignments.

In case you experience technical problems with the learning system, please contact immediately the help desk (860 832 1720)

Incompletes

The University's policy on the awarding of incompletes is discussed in the catalog and will be followed in this class.

Academic dishonesty

CCSU has a zero tolerance policy on academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes cheating on homework or exams, and also plagiarism. The unauthorized use of AI can also be regarded as academic misconduct (for instance, the use of AI tools – ChatGPT, or similar – to answer multiple choice, true/false or short essay questions). In written assignments, submission of AI generated text as the own work is considered plagiarism. Demonstrated cases of academic dishonesty can result in severe penalties including receiving an “F” in the class.

To learn more about this subject, please read CCSU's policy of academic misconduct at [ccsu/academicintegrity](https://ccsu.edu/academicintegrity)

Accessibility Accommodations

Central Connecticut State University is committed to providing equal access to its programs, services, and activities in accordance with applicable federal and state laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Students with documented disabilities or significant medical, psychological, or temporary conditions that may

warrant accommodations are encouraged to register with the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) as early as possible. OAS reviews impairment-related documentation, engages in an interactive process with students, and determines reasonable accommodations when appropriate. Although accommodation requests may be submitted at any time, accommodations cannot be applied retroactively. **To request accommodations, students should contact the Office of Accessibility Services**, located in Willard-DiLoreto Hall, Suite 201, by phone: 860-832-1952 or by email: accessibilityservices@ccsu.edu. Additional information about eligibility, registration procedures, documentation requirements, and services is available at <https://www.ccsu.edu/accessibility/>.

Diversity Statement

It is our intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. We will present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, perspective, and other background characteristics. Please let us know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, we have attempted to avoid conflicts with major religious holidays. If, however, we have inadvertently scheduled an exam or major deadline that creates a conflict with your religious observances, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can make other arrangements.

Tentative Course Outline

Week	Course Contents
Week 0 8/25 to 8/28	Instructor: José Carlos Del Ama Introduction to the Course What is Graduate Education? Communication Defined Early History of the Field of Communication
Week 1 8/31 to 9/4	Instructor: José Carlos Del Ama Strategic Communication Defined Internal vs. External Ethics and Communication “Thank you for Smoking”
Week 2 9/7 to 9/11	Instructor: José Carlos Del Ama Writing Styles and Research Methods: – Plagiarism, Citing Sources (APA Style) – Reading a Journal Article – Web Reference Materials – Writing a Review of the Literature Planned Program of Study and Capstones
Week 3 9/14 to 9/18	Instructor: José Carlos Del Ama Recent History of the Field of Communication: – Social Scientific vs. Humanistic – Qualitative vs. Quantitative – How Do Theory and Research Interconnect?
Week 4 9/21 to 9/25	Instructor: José Carlos Del Ama Historical Development: – The Public Be Fooled – The Public Be Damned – The Public Be Informed – The Public Be Understood The Ideal of Two-Way Symmetric Communication

Week	Course Contents
Week 5 9/28 to 10/2	Instructor: José Carlos Del Ama Theoretical Approaches to the Field of Strategic Communication Persuasion Theory October 2-4: 1st Exam Open
Week 6 10/5 to 10/9	Instructor: Becki Louys Internal Track: Foundations of Organizational Communication
Week 7 10/12 to 10/16	Instructor: Becki Louys Internal Track: Organizational Culture and Leadership October 16: Organizational Study Due
Week 8 10/19 to 10/23	Instructor: Becki Louys Internal Track: Power Dynamics, Conflict, and Organizational Communication
Week 9 10/26 to 10/30	Instructor: Becki Louys Internal Track: Globalization, Ethics, and Diversity October 30 – November 1: 2nd Exam Open
Week 10 11/2 to 11/6	Instructor: José Carlos Del Ama External Track: – The Role of Mass Media in Strategic Communication – Communication Conditions
Week 11 11/9 to 11/13	Instructor: José Carlos Del Ama External Track: – Public Opinion – Social Engineering – Public Opinion Structure

Week	Course Contents
Week 12 11/16 to 11/20	Instructor: José Carlos Del Ama Application Fields: – Philanthropy – Sponsoring – Community Relations – Environment Crisis Communication: Case Studies: – The Exxon-Valdez Environmental Catastrophe – The Tylenol Poisoning Tragedy
11/25 to 11/29	Thanksgiving Recess – No Contents
Week 13 11/30 to 12/4	Instructor: José Carlos Del Ama The New Communication Paradigm Persuasion in the Age of Digital Surveillance December 4: Case Study Due
12/7 to 12/13	Final Exams