

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES



**Australian School of Business
School of Organisation and Management**

COMM5001

**Business Communication,
Ethics and Practice**

**Course Outline
Semester Two, 2009**

1. Course Staff

Course Coordinator/

Lecturer-in-Charge: Dr. Suzanne Chan-Serafin
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 Consultation: Wednesday 16.30-17.30 ASB 502/511

Lecturer: Dr. Nick Wang
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 Consultation: Wednesday 15:30-16:30 ASB 540

Teaching Team

(Emails/Consultations): Ray Durham (raydurham@unsw.edu.au; W 13-14:00, ASB West Wing Lobby: Dial 59779)
 Noa Erez-Rein (noa@unsw.edu.au; W 14-15:00, ASB502)
 Dr. Louise Fitzgerald (l.fitzgerald@unsw.edu.au; W 16-17:00, ASB G07)
 Senia Kalfa (s.kalfa@unsw.edu.au; W 10-11:00; ASB502)
 Coral Reynolds (creynolds@evanspeck.com; M 8-8:45; ASB114)

Communication with teaching team

If you require more detailed advice about course content or have academic questions, you should consult your facilitator or the relevant topic lecturer in the first instance. Where necessary, they will consult with the lecturer-in-charge.

Contact teaching team members during their respective consultation times. All students are requested to use their UNSW e-mail addresses when contacting course staff and you are expected to use e-mail responsibly and respectfully. Please check your UNSW email account frequently as you may receive emails regarding the course throughout the semester.

2. Course Details

Lecture times and locations

Lecture	Day	Time	Location
A6009	Tuesday	18:00 – 19:30	PhysicsTh
C6011	Wednesday	11:00 – 12:30	MyersThtr

- ▶ For workshop times and locations, see course website (WebCT, <http://vista.elearning.unsw.edu.au>).
- ▶ Please attend the week's lecture *before* you attend the workshop.

Summary of Course (6 Unit of Credit)

This course addresses learning and communication skills that impact academic and professional performance. A major component of the course is devoted to communication, teamwork and conflict management skills and the capacity to apply them, including in cross-cultural contexts. Specific attention is paid to ethical frameworks and the opportunity for informed self-reflection in applying ethical perspectives in a business context.

3. Course Aims and Learning Outcomes

Course aims

The aim of the course is to foster the development of the communication competencies, ethical reasoning and people skills essential for professional business practice. The course combines theory and practice with the aim of encouraging active learning and greater reflection on your professional experience and expectations. The course also aims to help you improve your overall academic performance in the MCom by developing your learning skills, interpersonal communication competence, and cross-cultural sensitivity. Our experience is that through improving these skills, students enjoy their learning more and can develop a broad and enduring range of personal and professional networks.

COMM5001's relationship to other courses

This is a core course to be completed in the first semester of your MCom study. Knowledge and skills developed in this course are fundamental to many other MCom courses. You should find your learning in the areas of teamwork, intercultural communication and negotiation especially useful for the Project Management module in the Capstone Course, COMM5004. The study of Ethics in relation to both local and international business contexts in COMM5001 is very relevant to other disciplinary areas in the MCom. Examples include Professional Ethics, IT Ethics, Corporate Social Responsibility in Finance, Accounting and Marketing, and Ethical Relativism in International Business.

Student learning outcomes and ASB Graduate Attributes

On successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Understand your own academic, professional, and learning expectations, as well as those of the university and employers;
2. Critically analyse communication processes and identify techniques to improve the effectiveness of these processes;
3. Communicate more effectively interpersonally and in teams, whether in academic or business settings;
4. Understand the main conflict management and negotiation strategies;
5. Appreciate cultural differences in communication and develop strategies for improving intercultural communication;
6. Apply different ethical frameworks to analyse business dilemmas;
7. Identify the various stakeholders in organisations and evaluate potential conflicts between people's multiple roles; and,
8. Appreciate the interconnections between ethics, leadership, and professional practice.

The ASB Graduate Attributes were developed in 2008 in consultation with industry, staff, alumni and students. Their relationship to learning outcomes is presented below:

Australian School of Business Graduate Attributes	Related learning outcomes
(1) Critical thinking and problem solving	2, 6, 7
(2) Communication	2, 3, 5
(3) Teamwork and Leadership	3, 4, 8
(4) Social and global perspectives	5, 7
(5) In-depth engagement with relevant disciplinary knowledge	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
(6) Professional skills	1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8

See http://www.docs.fce.unsw.edu.au/fce/EDU/asb_graduate_attributes.pdf for details of each attribute.

4. Learning and Teaching Activities

Our approach to learning and teaching

In COMM5001, we take an active, adult-learning approach that stresses interactive teaching and learning. ***In order to succeed in this course, you must be an active participant in your own learning process.*** Learning in a class setting is a collective responsibility that requires you to ***read, reflect, listen, question, reformulate, and critique.*** This course is designed to foster such *collaborative learning*. In order for the lectures and workshops to be optimally productive, everyone will have to commit to doing the outside work; to bringing engaging ideas, questions, and issues for class discussion; to coming to class on time thoroughly prepared, mentally present, and fully involved throughout the class. If you have suggestions for making our time more engaging, the lecturers and facilitators expect you to make them. Your active participation will be one way that you can show that you are meeting the objectives of the course. “I’m shy” or “I’m not comfortable speaking in class” are not good excuses. This is the place to work on getting past these old ways of viewing yourself and to develop positive skills that help you to see your own potential.

The role of lectures

The lectures build from the ‘Student Learning Package’, which includes readings for each topic to set out the main ideas and theories for the course. Lectures are interactive. **We expect you to come to and be prepared for each lecture.** This means you should have worked through the student notes and readings and be ready with questions, comments, and suggestions.

This is a **reading intensive class**. You will need to allocate approximately three hours per week for basic reading.

The slides for the following week’s lecture will be posted on WebCT each Monday (e.g., Week 4 lecture slides will be available to you on Monday in Week 4).

The role of workshops

The weekly workshops provide you with an interactive environment in which to enhance your learning and your enjoyment of the course. The workshops are safe and supportive environment where you can freely and respectfully share your ideas. Each week’s workshop is linked to that week’s reading material and lecture.

The workshops will include a variety of practical and experiential-learning exercises, which encourage you to explore theoretical concepts, communication skills development, and your ethical reasoning; hence, increasing your competence across all the areas of the course. The workshops also provide you with opportunities to improve more generic interpersonal skills through interacting in diverse groups, forging learning networks, learning about other cultures, and learning to value opinions different to your own.

To prepare for the lectures and workshops, each week you must:

- **complete weekly readings**
- **complete out-of-class activities, where relevant**
- **work through the questions in the student-learning packet**
- **download the weekly lecture slides from WebCT**

Student responsibilities and conduct

Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to university policies in relation to class attendance and general conduct and behaviour, including maintaining a safe, respectful environment; and to understand their obligations in relation to workload, assessment and keeping informed.

Information and policies on these topics can be found in the 'A-Z Student Guide': <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/ABC.html>. See, especially, information on 'Attendance and Absence', 'Academic Misconduct', 'Assessment Information', 'Examinations', 'Special Consideration', 'Student Responsibilities', 'Workload' and policies such as 'Occupational Health and Safety'.

5. Assessment

Formal requirements

In order to pass this course, you must:

- achieve a composite mark of at least 50; and,
- submit all assessment tasks listed below.

Assessment details

Assessment	Weight	Length	Due
i) Critical review	15%	1000 words	Week 4
ii) Team project	38%	3000 words	Weeks 6 and 10
iii) Final examination	30%	2 hours	Oct 30 to Nov 17
iv) Overall participation	17%	N/A	Continuous

- ▶ Word limits flexible within +/- 10% of prescribed limit. Deviations are subject to penalties.
- ▶ Team project word limit may be revised *only* in cases where group does not comprise three members.

i) Critical review (15 marks total)

In the workplace we typically need to assimilate large amounts of information, often under time pressure. We also need to be able to evaluate that information, for example by assessing:

- the purpose of the writing (introduce new idea, explain, persuade, challenge);
- the genre of writing (academic, commercial, consultancy report or other);
- the arguments and perspectives being presented; and,
- the basis of the argument (research, logic, opinions and beliefs).

We also need to formulate an appropriate response, through providing an opinion, comment or other feedback or making recommendations. In addition, we need to know how to translate this information into something meaningful to third parties such as our boss, colleagues, employees, clients or suppliers. This assessment will help you improve your skills in these areas and understand issues relating to business communication and ethics. The critical review should contain your reflections on the two assigned readings which will be placed on the COMM5001 WebCT by Week 1.

Deliverable

You need to conduct a **comparative review** of the articles, identifying their key themes or content and analysing the main issues advanced. In the process, you should identify

the similarities and differences between the two articles; evaluate their strengths and weaknesses; comment on the validity of their arguments; and, the appropriateness of the research methodology (if relevant).

Use an **essay format** for your analysis. You may choose to conduct a comparison of the two articles, or a discussion of the first article followed by a discussion of the second article. **The key points to remember are to include the comparative analyses and your opinion of the articles.**

Be discerning in what you include and discuss the issues that you find meaningful, interesting and/or controversial. We are looking for reflections on the ideas and arguments of the whole article – not minor points. Please be careful to distinguish clearly between the author's observations and your own. The use of expressions such as 'I think' is acceptable in a critical review.

Please note that a critique of writing style without discussion of substantive content does not constitute satisfactory analysis. For example, '*the paper was difficult to read because the author used lots of jargon*' or '*the article was good because it used real life examples*' are not relevant for the critical review.

Each review should be approximately 1,000 words in length (excluding the references). A *suggested* structure for your review is:

- 300 words (maximum) – summary of the main issues/themes for the two articles;
- 500 words – discussion of the authors' underlying assumptions, their ideas/arguments/ and of the strengths and limitations of those arguments
- 100 words for any further comparison of the two pieces; and,
- 100 words for your own reflections.

Full academic referencing is required.

Please refer to '*Writing a Critical Review*' and '*Harvard Referencing Guide*' on WebCT (EDU Guides folder).

Marking Criteria

You will be assessed on the degree to which your critical review provides a succinct summary of the key points in the readings and provides evidence of your thinking about the articles in terms of key issues, such as:

- Assumptions, explicit and implicit, in the papers;
- Strengths and limitations of the authors' ideas and assumptions;
- Usefulness of the papers;
- How the papers compare to other ideas/ approaches in other readings/ lectures.

Your review should provide a consistent and coherent comparative critique. Specifically, the assessment criteria will be based on five components:

1. Quality of analysis and depth of reflection
2. Summary of key points in the readings
3. Evidence of your thinking about the readings in terms of key issues, common themes and differences, limitations
4. Consistent, clear and well-supported argument
5. Structure, written expression, length & presentation

Student learning outcomes and ASB Graduate Attributes assessed

Relevant learning outcomes (see section 3): 3

Relevant Graduate Attributes (see section 3): 1, 5

ii) Team project (38 marks total)

In this project, you will consider the communication and ethical issues pertinent to a case (available on WebCT in Week 3). The aims of the project are for you to 1) apply concepts in the course to a real-world example and 2) practice and improve your teamwork skills, especially its vital communication aspects. As such, please use the various skills and ideas from the course, including active listening, self-reflection, effective teamwork and conflict resolution. In all, this project will help you enhance your skills in project management, team dynamics, research, communication, ethical analysis and report writing.

Our assessment of the project will be a piece of *research-based report writing* that combines academic and consulting genres, as well as a *team contract* (and any updated versions of it). The latter exercise facilitates effective team functioning.

Deliverables

You will form project teams of 3 to 4 students (wherever workshop numbers allow). All team members must be in the same workshop and from diverse backgrounds. With your facilitator's help, you should finalise membership of teams by the end of Week 3.

You will then download the case study on WebCT. The case study and accompanying questions will be available from Week 3. Topic questions will be assigned in Week 4.

Our experience is that teamwork is mostly a very positive experience, particularly where teams have sufficient time and communication possibilities. You will have most of the semester to work together on this. If you require a group discussion facility within WebCT, this can be arranged with the lecturer-in-charge.

Your team is to work together on planning, analysing, developing, writing up, and editing your project report ready for submission. You are also jointly responsible for allocating relevant tasks including research, logistical and organisational duties. All team members should have a similar level of involvement in the research process and in the organization and writing of team reports.

At your Week 6 workshop, your team will provide your facilitator with a **team contract** in which you clearly specify 1) *your team's goals/objectives*; 2) *team member roles and responsibilities in the project*; 3) *ground rules (norms of behaviour)*; 4) *communication protocol*; and, 5) *time-line/planning document (e.g., Gantt chart)*. As evidence of your agreement to these elements, each team member will sign that contract. More information about the team contract will be provided during Week 4 Lecture.

Your facilitator will review each team contract and return with comments regarding inequitable task allocations and ways to improve contract specifications, if any. If, subsequently, your team changes its allocation of tasks and other contract specifications, you must provide your facilitator with an updated (and signed) contract. Each team member will sign the final team report as evidence that you all agree that the team has largely carried out the project as agreed in the contract.

The teaching team expects each student to fulfil their team commitments. In cases where this does not occur, the remaining team members may request a reduced (or higher) grade for the non-contributing (or especially hardworking) team member. Please use the '*Peer Assessment Form*' (see WebCT) for this purpose.

In the very rare cases where there are severe problems with teamwork, particularly where this involves the failure of a team member to engage in the project process, then

aggrieved team members should, at the first instance, see their facilitator. Where this is, for any reason, difficult, you should contact the lecturer-in-charge. It is best, in these circumstances, to collect and provide documentary evidence such as emails or diary notes of commitments not fulfilled.

The lecturer-in-charge will be taking a very tough line with any student judged to have largely failed to fulfil their commitments to their team, unless s/he receives a timely, reasonable and documented excuse (medical or compassionate).

Please Note: When you submit your team project report, you will also need to separately submit a paragraph outlining your thoughts on the team process itself. In terms of working together to achieve a common goal, what was your particular team like? What were the strengths of your team? Did any problems arise? How did you resolve them? What did you learn from this exercise – e.g., in regard to sharing tasks, decision-making, team communication and/or conflict resolution? Please submit this section individually. *Please note that the team assignment will NOT be marked if any member fails to submit this component.*

Your team will present its final analysis in the form of a **3000 word written report** (for a team of 3). The word limit excludes the executive summary and reference list that you need to provide. You may also include appendices where necessary. Appendices are also excluded from the word length.

More details regarding the case and the report format will be provided in WebCT and during Week 4 lecture and workshop.

Marking criteria

- 1) Quality of analysis, depth of reflection
- 2) Links to theory and course literature
- 3) Relevance to question
- 3) Consistent, clear and well-supported argument
- 4) Structure, written expression, length and presentation

Student learning outcomes and ASB Graduate Attributes assessed

Relevant learning outcomes (see section 3): 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Relevant Graduate Attributes (see section 3): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

iii) Final examination (30 marks)

You will sit a 2 hour open-book examination at the end of semester, during the formal Examination Period. The exam will consist of brief essay-style questions (you will have some internal choice) that give you the opportunity to integrate key concepts and issues raised in class.

You will be able to bring paper-based material into the exam, but no electronic devices or CDs will be allowed.

Our aim for the exam is to encourage you to review your course material for the semester and to do so in ways that are analytical, evaluative and problem-solving. The exam will ask you to think creatively about how you could apply concepts from the course to particular situations and to bring together concepts from different topics. More details about the exam will be provided on WebCT and Week 11 and 12 classes.

Student learning outcomes and ASB Graduate Attributes assessed

Relevant learning outcomes (see section 3): 2, 3, 6, 7, 8

Relevant Graduate Attributes (see section 3): 1, 2, 4, 5

iv) Overall Participation (17 marks total)

To further the objectives of this course, your lecturer and workshop facilitators will assign you a mark (out of 17) that reflects their assessment of the level of your **informed** contribution to the lecture (5 marks) and workshop (12 marks) activities over the course of the semester. **Student participation is thus highly valued and rewarded.** Simply attending lectures and workshops regularly is a necessary criterion but, without getting actively involved in the class exercises, it is of little value either to you or your classmates and will gain very few participation marks. The lecturer and workshop facilitators will ask you to place your name tents in front of you during the lectures and workshops so that they can give you proper credit for your participation. You will be asked to engage in in-class and out-of-class activities so as to help you reflect on and discuss course concepts. Blatant rudeness, uncivil language, or other types of antisocial behaviour will result in an automatic 0% in this category.

In order to participate in an informed way, it is essential that you have read **at least the basic reading** for that week (and when necessary engage in out-of-class exercises) and that you are ready to reflect on it in class. You should note down issues that you do not understand and raise them in the lecture and workshop.

Marking criteria

- 1) Regular willingness to answer questions in class
- 2) Regularly raising stimulating questions in class
- 3) Active involvement in in-class group work
- 4) Active involvement in case discussions (e.g., regularly link readings and out-of-class activities to discussions)
- 5) Positive attitude
- 6) Level of attendance

Student learning outcomes and ASB Graduate Attributes assessed

Relevant learning outcomes (see section 3): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Relevant Graduate Attributes (see section 3): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Assignment submission procedure

You must submit all parts of the assignment on time to your facilitator during the workshops the assignments are due.

Procedure:

1. Attach a copy of the School cover sheet found in COMM5001 WebCT.
2. Your facilitator will provide you with a written receipt at the time of submission.
3. Submit an *additional* copy of your *critical review* and *team project report* to www.turnitin.com in WebCT.
4. Do not submit assignments by e-mail, by fax, or by slipping under office doors.

Late submission

A penalty of 10% per day of the marks available for that assignment will apply for work received after the due date.

Extensions will only be granted on medical or compassionate grounds under extreme circumstances by the lecturer-in-charge. Requests for extensions must be made in writing to the lecturer-in-charge prior to the due date. Medical certificates or other evidence supporting your claim must be attached.

6. Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

The University regards plagiarism as a form of academic misconduct, and has very strict rules regarding plagiarism. For UNSW policies, penalties and information to help you avoid plagiarism see: <http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism/index.html> as well as the guidelines in the online ELISE tutorial for all new UNSW students: <http://info.library.unsw.edu.au/skills/tutorials/InfoSkills/index.html>

For information on how to acknowledge your sources and reference correctly, see: <http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/ref.html>

For the ASB Harvard Referencing Guide, see: http://www.docs.fce.unsw.edu.au/fce/EDU/harvard_ref_guide.pdf

7. Course Resources

Prescribed readings

The prescribed readings for this course are contained in the *COMM5001 Student Learning Package* that we have developed. You can buy a hardcopy or CD version of it from the UNSW Bookshop¹. There are also a few copies on Reserve in the Library.

The *COMM5001 Student Learning Package* contains:

1. 'Introductory Themes' for each weekly topic. We have written these for you to use as a starting point. They include questions, short exercises and suggestions for further reading. *You should read these notes before you come to each lecture.*
2. 'Required Reading' for each weekly topic. These include relevant articles that build on the 'Introductory Themes', and complement the lectures and workshops.

Together, the *Student Learning Package* and Lectures form the basic knowledge base for the course. You will need to read more widely for particular assessment items.

WebCT

Class announcements, slides, and relevant materials will be posted on WebCT (<http://vista.elearning.unsw.edu.au>). You must check this website *regularly* for important updates/information for the course.

8. Continuous Course Evaluation and Development

Each year, we seek feedback from students and other stakeholders about the courses we offer in the ASB. The introduction of COMM5001 in 2005 was itself the fruit of a sustained process of Faculty-wide evaluation.

¹ Note that if you buy the CD version of the Student Learning Package you will need to print hard copies of any sections you wish to take into the exam. Electronic devices such as laptops will not be permitted.

Our teaching team uses your course-level feedback to guide our continued review and redesigning of the course. This continuous improvement process can affect the structure, content, resources, delivery or assessment of the course. Thus, the COMM5001 course you are doing this semester reflects changes we have made in responses to feedback from students and the teaching team last year. For example, we have reduced the number of assessments, as these were areas of student concern that we felt justified modifications. Hence, please provide *detailed constructive feedback* at the end of the semester.

9. Additional student resources and support

The University and the ASB provide a wide range of support services for students, including:

ASB Education Development Unit (EDU)

Academic writing, study skills and maths support specifically for ASB students. Services include workshops, online and printed resources, and individual consultations. EDU Office: Room GO7, Ground Floor, ASB Building (opposite Student Centre); Ph: 9385 5584; Email: edu@unsw.edu.au

Library training and search support services: <http://info.library.unsw.edu.au>

Student Equity & Disabilities Unit

Students who require advice regarding equity and diversity issues, or have a disability that requires some adjustment in their teaching or learning environment are encouraged to discuss their study needs with the Lecturer-in-charge or the Equity Officer (<http://www.studentequity.unsw.edu.au/>). Early notification of course staff is essential to enable any necessary adjustments to be made.

Office: G/F, John Goodsell Building (phone 9385 4734).

10. Course schedule

Week beginning	Week	Topic
Jul 15	0	Orientation Week (no class)
Jul 20	1	Managers and professionals as learners
Jul 27	2	Intra- and Interpersonal Communication I
Aug 3	3	Interpersonal Communication II: Non-verbal communication, listening and feedback
Aug 10	4	Communication and Conflict in Teams*
Aug 17	5	Business and Organisational Communication
Aug 24	6	Inter-cultural Communication**
Aug 31	7	Why Ethics?
Mid-semester break:		Sept 5 to Sept 13
Sep 14	8	Frameworks for Ethical Thinking
Sep 21	9	Managing Multiple Roles and Multiple Stakeholders
Sep 28	10	Professional Practice, Leadership and Influencing Skills***
Oct 5	11	Conflict Management Techniques and Negotiation Skills
Oct 12	12	Conclusion and Course Review

* **Critical Review due in workshops this week**

** **First Draft of Team Contract due in workshops this week**

*****Team Project due in workshops this week**

Study period: Oct 24 to Oct 29

Examination: Oct 30 to Nov 17

UNSW Calendar: <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/resources/AcademicCalendar.html>

WELCOME TO UNSW AND ENJOY YOUR STUDIES THIS SEMESTER!