### Class code
SOIM-UB9065006

### Instructor Details
Tomáš Klvaňa, MA, PhD
tomasklvana@me.com
(Office Hours by Appointment)

### Class Details
**Organizational Communication and its Social Context**

Spring 2015

Section One Monday, 10:30 a.m. - 1:20 p.m.

### Prerequisites
First course in the Stern Social Impact Core Curriculum, i.e., Business and its Publics

### Class Description
Organizational Communication and its Social Context is the second stage of Stern’s four-year Social Impact Core Curriculum. Business and its Publics examines the relationships between corporations and society, particularly the social issues that arise from business operations. This course focuses on how companies communicate with multiple audiences: their various stakeholders.

### Desired Outcomes
In Organizational Communication and its Social Context, you will learn business communication principles and have multiple opportunities to apply them to specific oral and written assignments, with the objective of enhancing your ability to write, present, and speak as a business professional. Practical applications will include 1) creating persuasive presentations and documents; 2) practicing team leadership and communication; and 3) effective management of time, tasks and deliverables.

### Assessment Components
The assignments (some group, some individual) run throughout the semester, altogether amounting to 100%. The final grade will be based 70% on individual performance and 30% on team performance. Non-fulfillment of any required course component results in failure of the class.

1. Business Document (Paper – 5 individual points)
2. Best Team Experience (Paper – 5 individual points)
3. 1st Team Presentation on Siemens (5 team points)
4. Siemens Facebook Document (5 individual points)
5. 2nd Team Presentation: Company Profile (5 team & 5 individual points)
6. Blackfish position paper (10 individual points)
7. 3rd Team Presentation: SeaWorld’s Crisis Communication (5 team & 5 individual points)
8. 4th Team Presentation: Issues Facing Your Company (10 & 10 team points)
9. Final Team Presentation (10 team & 10 individual points)
10. Class Participation: attendance, reading, class discussion, teamwork, video reviews (10 individual points)
### Assessment Expectations

- **Grade A**: Full mastery of the topic, excellent work of the highest standard
- **Grade B**: Generally good command of topics with a few areas for minor improvement
- **Grade C**: Generally satisfactory work with some areas identified for improvement
- **Grade D**: Reasonable work but containing some areas which may require major improvement
- **Grade F**: Work which requires significant improvements in a number of areas

Note that while the School uses these ranges as a guide, the actual distribution for this course and your own grade will depend upon how well you actually perform in this course.

### Course basics: teams, readings, NYU Classes

Reflecting the use of teams in the business world, part of this course is based on teamwork and team assignments. You’ll be assigned to teams early in the course, and we’ll discuss the rights and responsibilities of the teams in class. (Each team will need to meet on average once a week outside of class.) Course materials will be managed via NYU Classes. Materials that are available in electronic form will be posted to NYU Classes. You’ll be directed to post assignments to specific NYU Classes locations, unless paper versions are needed for class work.

To do well in this course, you need to:

- Complete all individual and team assignments on time, whether graded or ungraded
- Follow the specific assignment requirements in this course outline
- Participate in class discussions
- Contribute to team assignments

### Grading guidelines

At NYU Stern, we strive to create courses that challenge students intellectually and that meet the Stern standards of academic excellence. To ensure fairness and clarity of grading, the Stern faculty have adopted a grading guideline for core courses with enrollments of more than 25 students in which approximately 35% of students will receive an “A” or “A-” grade. In core classes of less than 25 students, the instructor is at liberty to give whatever grades they think the students deserve, while maintaining rigorous academic standards.

### Grade conversion

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### Attendance Policy

Absences only for medical reasons and for religious observance will be excused. To obtain an excused absence, you are obliged to supply either a doctor’s note or corroboration of your illness by a member of the housing staff (either an RA or a Building Manager). To be excused for religious observance, you must contact the instructor and the Associate Director via e-mail one week in advance of the holiday. Your absence is excused for the holiday only and does not include days of travel associated with the holiday. Unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from your final course grade for every week of classes missed.
### Late Submission of Work

At the discretion of the professor, late assignments will incur a grade penalty, unless due to documented serious illness or family emergency. Professors will make exceptions for religious observance or civic obligation only when the assignment cannot reasonably be completed prior to the due date and the student makes prior arrangements for late submission.

### Plagiarism Policy

According to the Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook, plagiarism is defined as follows:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s work as though it were one’s own. More specifically plagiarism is to present as one’s own a sequence of words quoted without quotation marks from another writer, a paraphrased passage from another writer’s work; facts or ideas gathered, organized and reported by someone else, orally and/or in writing. Since plagiarism is a matter of fact, not of the student’s intention, it is crucial that acknowledgment of the sources be accurate and complete. Even where there is no conscious intention to deceive, the failure to make appropriate acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism.

The College of Arts and Science’s Academic Handbook defines plagiarism similarly and also specifies the following:

“presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written), writing a paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else’s idea without a reference to the source of the idea, or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both teachers have given their permission in advance).

Receiving help on a take-home examination or quiz is also cheating – and so is giving that help – unless expressly permitted by the teacher (as in collaborative projects). While all this looks like a lot to remember, all you need to do is give credit where it is due, take credit only for original ideas, and ask your teacher or advisor when in doubt.”

“Penalties for plagiarism range from failure for a paper, failure for the course or dismissal from the university.” (Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook)

### Required Text(s) and Video

1. **Organizational Communication and Its Social Context** - Custom edition available online via the instructions below.
   b) A hardcopy of the text can be ordered from Amazon, or purchased at the NYU Bookstore in New York (ISBN Number: 97811211619067)


4. **Blackfish** (2013) - A documentary film by Gabriela Cowperthwaite

### Supplemental Text(s)

None

### Internet Research Guidelines

- **www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/index.htm** - Guide to Grammar and Writing (explanations, examples, quizzes, FAQs; excellent online assistance)
- **[www.sec.gov/news/extra/handbook.htm](http://www.sec.gov/news/extra/handbook.htm)** - Use this link to access the SEC’s free and downloadable Plain English Handbook – very helpful for writing assignments
- **[www.businessweek.com](http://www.businessweek.com)** – Offers additional information to add to what’s in the weekly magazine.
- **[www.ceoexpress.com/](http://www.ceoexpress.com/)** This site lists references and resources for all kinds of information with a focus on business.
- **[http://library.nyu.edu/vbl/](http://library.nyu.edu/vbl/)** NYU Virtual Business Library
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<th>Session</th>
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| Session 1 | Monday, Feb 2 | **TOPIC:** Introduction; Stakeholder Theory | READINGS: Read the first three parts of the main text, OC&SC Course Reader & World Bank 'CommGAP' (download the PDF at the link below)  
| Session 2 | Monday, Feb 9 | **TOPIC:** Communication Strategy | READING: Guide to Presentations Chapter 1  
ASSIGNMENT #1:  
Bring the business document from any organization. Submit your written paper by email to the professor before the class session. |
| Session 3 | Monday, Feb 16 (i) | **TOPIC** for independent study: Independent Team Formation | READINGS:  
http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2012/07/yes_you_can_brainstorm_without.html &  
http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/mgi/research/technology_and_innovation/the_social_economy  
**TOPIC for independent study:** Business Writing: Structure, Organization, Persuasion  
READINGS: Guide to Presentations Chapter 4  
& A Plain English Handbook: How to create clear SEC disclosure documents, pp. 15-36  
ASSIGNMENT #2: Reflect on a ‘best team story’ and be prepared to share it with your new team in the following class session. Strictly following the guidelines, submit a brief written version of the story by email during this class session (max. one double-spaced page). |
| Session 4 | Monday, Feb 23 | **TOPIC:** Siemens - From Scandal to a Role Model in Sustainability | READINGS:  
The New York Times - At Siemens, Bribery Was Just a Line Item  
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/21/business/worldbusiness/21siemens.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0  
Harvard Business Review - The CEO of Siemens on Using a Scandal to Drive Change  
http://hbr.org/2012/11/the-ceo-of-siemens-on-using-a-scandal-to-drive-change/ar/  
Siemens 2012 Sustainability Report  
**TOPIC:** Introduction to Effective Business Writing  
READINGS: Guide to Presentations Chapter 3  
& A Plain English Handbook: How to create clear SEC disclosure documents, pp. 5-10 |
| Session 5 | Monday, March 2 | **TOPIC:** Presentation Delivery Techniques | READING: Guide to Presentations Chapter 6  
ASSIGNMENT #3: Team Presentations on Siemens’ 2012 Sustainability Report  
Note: Teams will discuss which company they will choose for future assignments |
| Session 6 | Monday, March 9 | **TOPIC:** Business Writing: Editing and Document Design, Reports, memos, letters, executive summaries and email; Stakeholder Management and Global Corporate Citizenship; | READING: A Plain English Handbook: How to create clear SEC disclosure documents, pp. 37-54; Finish the entire main course text, OC&SC Course Reader (including appendices) |
| Session 7 | Monday, March 16 | **TOPIC:** Presentation Techniques (Revisited): Handling Questions and Answers | READING: Guide to Presentations Chapter 4 (Review)  
ASSIGNMENT #4 Due: Siemens’ Facebook Report  
**TOPIC:** Using Visual Aids  
READING: Guide to Presentations Chapter 5  
In-class team planning session for upcoming presentations |
Session 8  
Monday, March 23

TOPIC: Strategic Corporate Communications: Managing Issues  
In-class team preparation session for upcoming presentations

Session 9  
Monday, March 30

TOPIC: Assignment #5: Team Presentations: Company Profiles

Spring Break - April 6-10 – No Classes

Session 10  
Monday, April 13

TOPIC: Crisis Communication: Managing Issues  
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2545118/

Session 11  
Monday, April 20

TOPIC: Crisis Communication: Managing Issues, class discussion on Blackfish & Corporate Social Responsibility  
READINGS: “Why Your Company Needs a CSR Strategy” (PDF via NYU Courses)  
Assignment 6 (Blackfish position paper) due on Friday, November 14 (via email to the professor, 2 double-spaced pages)

Session 12  
Monday, April 27

TOPIC: Assignment 7: Team Presentations: SeaWorld Crisis Communication

Session 13  
Monday, May 4

TOPIC: Assignment 8: Team Presentations: Issues Facing ‘Your’ Firm

Session 14  
Monday, May 11 (last day of classes)

TOPIC: Course Review and Final Team Presentation Prep

Session 15  
Monday, May 18  
Final exam

Assignment 9: Final Team Presentations

Classroom Etiquette  
Participation is a key expectation in this course – and includes being prepared for class discussions, being on time for class, and attending class regularly. Attendance implies being present, which is not possible if one is focused on a laptop or smart phone. The course involves many in-class activities, which can’t be made up. Be prepared to discuss assigned readings. Listening to others when they are speaking is a positive way to participate. Participating in your team is also required, and poor team participation will result in lower grades. Late assignments, lack of preparation for class discussion or presentations, and absences will result in a lower grade. As in any professional situation, please explain any absence to the professor in advance, or as quickly as possible; an email is appropriate.

Required Co-curricular Activities  
None. Students are encouraged to take advantage of public lectures at NYU, and to familiarize themselves with contemporary Czech politics and controversies.

>> Assignment 1: Business Document

Task: Locate and bring a business document to class

Details: Locate any one-page business document that interests you from any company. It can be a part of a CEO letter in an annual report; another section of an annual report; an announcement / policy change / memo from their workplace; a full-page ad from a specific company, and so on.

Write a brief response to the following question: Why was it written and who is the intended audience?
**Deliverable:** A Word document of no more than 120 words that answers the question. Email your paper to the professor before class. Make sure your file is labeled with your first name/last name.

**>> Assignment 2: Best Team Experience**

You will soon be meeting your team for the first time. This is the team you will be working with throughout the rest of the course. As preparation for getting off to a strong start, you will be participating in an Appreciative Inquiry exercise in class.

**Task:** Reflect on a team experience where you performed at your best. It can be any team from a work or school project or volunteer experience. Capture the essential elements of that experience and be prepared to share it with your new team. What was it like? What were your strengths in the team? How did the team operate? What descriptive adjectives characterize your performance? Try to be as specific with the details as you can.

**Deliverable:** Email your paper to the professor after the class exercise. It should be limited to 200 words.

**>>>> Assignments 3 - 4: Siemens - From Scandal to a Role Model in Sustainability**

Siemens, a global German Company founded in 1847, became bedeviled by bribery and corruption scandals in the last decade. It ended up paying the largest corporate fine ever: USD 1.6 billion in the United States and Germany. It also paid more than one billion USD for internal investigations and reforms. For background please read:

The New York Times - At Siemens, Bribery Was Just a Line Item
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/21/business/worldbusiness/21siemens.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Harvard Business Review - The CEO of Siemens on Using a Scandal to Drive Change http://hbr.org/2012/11/the-ceo-of-siemens-on-using-a-scandal-to-drive-change/ar/ (you will need to register and will be able to read the article for free)

The Company has restructured and also revamped the corporate communications strategy. It has reinforced its sustainability drive, becoming one of the leaders on various sustainability indexes. Please read its latest Siemens Sustainability Report. (Available on the company website)

**>> Assignment 3: Team Presentation on the Siemens Sustainability Report**

Assume you are a member of a Company that is a competitor to Siemens and wants to emulate its stakeholder comms success. You are on your Company’s Corporate Communication Task Force on Stakeholder Engagement. The Task Force has been instructed to analyze how Siemens’ Sustainability Report addresses its various stakeholders (audiences). You need to perform Audience Analysis. Essentially, the team has to ask itself: “What are the various stakeholder groups that the Sustainability Report addresses and what strategies does it employ?” This is the core question your team must address in the 7-10 minute presentation.

To do this, your team needs to consider various stakeholder groups specifically by examining:

What is the group’s (potential or actual) relationship to Siemens? How large is the group? What are the demographics of the stakeholder group? What are the sources of their influence/power? What are their interests? What are the most effective ways of communicating with them?

**Generally, companies like Siemens address some or all of the following stakeholder groups:** Shareholders, Regulators (Politicians), Environmental NGOs, Wall Street Equity Analysts, Suppliers, Customers, Media and other.

**Task:** Prepare an analysis of the Siemens 2012 Sustainability Report audience (stakeholder) groups and evaluate Siemens’s strategies employed in the Report.

**Deliverable:** A team presentation lasting 7-10 minutes (depending on class size), with 2-5 minutes afterwards for questions; each team member must speak. No PowerPoint bullet slides are permitted, but you may use PowerPoint to show projected photographs, maps, charts or illustrations.

**Evaluation:** The team will be evaluated on your presentation’s effectiveness and organization.
>> Assignment 4: Individual Written Document on Siemens’s Facebook Strategy

**Assignment objective:** This assignment will give you an opportunity to learn how to write a business report and demonstrate your understanding of purpose, audience, and organization in business documents.

**Task:** Consider how Siemens uses Facebook. What are the various communications strategies Siemens is using on its Facebook page? Is there a synergy with the Sustainability Report? Are these two unrelated communications strategies? Are you satisfied with the synergy or could there be room for improvement? Do you have any other suggestion? And who exactly is Siemens’s FB audience?

Your task is to report to your Company’s Head of Corporate Communications on the Siemens Facebook strategies and suggest improvements. The document will be used as a background paper for your Company’s Facebook communications strategies (your Company plans to roll out its Facebook page in the next business quarter).

**Deliverable:** A single, hard copy document containing your Report (2 pages maximum). Via email to the professor before class.

**Reminder about Plagiarism:** Cutting and pasting from any existing written materials, online or printed, including a website, without attribution constitutes plagiarism. If you include text from existing materials, it must be attributed. If you fail to do this and your plagiarism is discovered, you will receive an F for the assignment.

>> Assignment 5: Team Informative Presentation: Company Profile

**Task:** Your team will now work together to prepare and deliver a set of presentations concerning the corporate communication strategies. For assignments 8 and 9, you will present as members of the company’s corporate communications department; however, for this assignment you are presenting as yourselves to all the other teams. Tell the class what specifically interests your team about the company you have selected.

- Your team presentation should inform the class about the most important aspects of the company. Use the corporate worksheet from class to research interesting and useful company data. Your presentation should include basic information, such as:
  - The size of the company: locations, employees, revenue, etc.
  - Primary competitors
  - Overall state of the industry
  - Company mission or goals (as stated on corporate website or annual report)
  - Brief financial summary
  - Products and services
  - Any special features of this company

In addition, this assignment should describe the company’s communications practices:

- What messages does the company emphasize?
- How does the company communicate its CSR, sustainability and/or environmental issues?
- What is the company’s brand promise?
- What are the company’s publications?
- What channels are employed?
- How frequently do messages on these topics go to which audiences

The assignment should incorporate the use of credible information sources, appropriate media resources, and information about the C-suite of the team’s company.

**Hint:** Organize your content for the effective delivery; do not use the above as a content checklist.

**Your objective:** Craft an interesting informative message about your company and provide a context for the class to understand your later presentations.

**Time limits:** Maximum 10 minutes for the presentation, followed by 3 minutes for questions. You must share the speaking time equally.
Visual aids: Use minimal visual aids; avoid using dense text slides. Think visually, not verbally on your slides.

>> Assignments 6-7: SeaWorld vs. Blackfish: Crisis Communication

The following two assignments will explore and evaluate the SeaWorld crisis communication in its high-profile controversy surrounding Blackfish, a documentary film. You will watch the film in class or at your own convenience. Read-up on the controversy. Do your own background research. Initial resources can be found here but more individual research is required:

http://www.salon.com/2014/07/31/seaworld_and_southwest_airlines_end_longtime_partnership/,
http://finance.yahoo.com/blogs/the-exchange/seaworld-earnings-165331773.html,
http://www.takepart.com/article/2013/10/24/blackfish-cnn-seaworld-trainer-dawn-brancheau-tilikum,
http://www.kunocreative.com/blog/bid/89208/SeaWorld-vs-Blackfish-A-Crisis-PR-War-Rages-on-Social-Media,
http://sundial.csun.edu/2014/04/documentary-director-discusses-motivation-behind-blackfish/,

In Assignment 6 (Individual) you will write your own individual two-page, double-spaced response (a position paper) to the film. You will evaluate the film’s goal, targeted audience(s), its strengths and weaknesses, and assess how well the film has achieved its objectives. I am interested in your views supported by evidence.

In Assignment 7 (Team) your team will provide a comprehensive evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of SeaWorld’s corporate crisis communication in the Blackfish controversy and suggest specific improvements. Your power point/prezi presentation will take 10 minutes with up to 3 additional minutes for a Q&A session.

>> Assignment 8: Team Presentation: Issues Facing Your Firm

Task: For this presentation, your team will prepare a persuasive presentation concerning the primary issues facing your chosen company. As we discussed in class, how an organization responds to issues relates directly to stakeholder relationships. Assume that your team comprises the task force that has been assembled by the Senior Vice President of Corporate Communication. The SVP wants your team to analyze the primary issues facing the organization and which groups are pushing these issues. The SVP also asks the team to recommend a course of action that will address the issues and the relevant stakeholders. Keep the AIM model in mind as you prepare your recommendations and consider the appropriate communication channels to use.

Your objective: To persuade your audience that your issue-response plan will be strategically sound and tactically address critical stakeholders.

Time limits: Maximum 12 minutes for the presentation, followed by 3 minutes for questions. You must share the speaking time equally.

Visual aids: Use visual aids, but avoid using dense text slides. Think visually, not verbally on your slides.

>> Assignment 9: Final Team Presentation

Task and Audience: The CEO of your company has publicly committed the firm to “high performance with high integrity” to maintain a positive social impact. Your team from Corporate Communication has already addressed the range of issues facing the company and how it should respond. Your presentations to the SVP of Corporate Communication have been forwarded to the C-Suite (CEO, CFO, CIO, etc.) of the company. As a result, the CEO requests a status report and assessment of how the firm presents itself to its multiple stakeholders.

For this presentation assignment, your team should choose only 1 of the following options:

1. How effectively is the company communicating its CSR initiatives or sustainability focus to major stakeholder groups? How does the company support its overall image as a socially responsible firm? Make sure that your measure of effectiveness incorporates how well these initiatives support the company’s overall mission and strategic plan. Consider the channels used and the frequency of messages to 3-4 market or non-market stakeholder groups.

2. Over the past 2-3 years, how has the company communicated its positive social impact identity visually? By reviewing images and design used in corporate logos, brochures, media/print advertising, and investor relations documents, assess how well the company presents an image consistent with its mission and strategic plan. Consider the specific audiences that the company is communicating to publicly: are the messages consistent? How valid are the
channels used? You could consider comparing your company to 1-2 others in the same industry. No matter which option you choose, you should incorporate the following points:

1. Your audience is the CEO and other members of the C-suite. What information will be most effective in supporting your position to them? Be aware of what they can be expected to know.
2. The company’s communication mix probably includes both strategic and responsive communication. Provide examples of each to demonstrate effectiveness.
3. What recommendation/s would you make to enhance communication of the company’s strategy and mission to stakeholders?

**Time limits:** Maximum 12 minutes for the presentation, followed by up to 3 minutes for questions. You must share the speaking time equally.

**Visual aids:** Use visual aids, but avoid using dense text slides. Think visually, not verbally on your slides.