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activity leading

Objectives:

- To demonstrate your knowledge of organizational communication research
- To facilitate an engaging activity with your colleagues and teach them something new
- To practice synthesizing organizational communication literature

Assignment:

In small groups, prepare and lead an engaging 25-30* minute class activity based upon a chosen topic area, **supplementing** the course material with your own research and teaching the class something new about organizational communication.

Directions:

1. **Read your week's chapter and/or readings closely.** Choose a topic to explore that either complements the class's reading, or dives into a chapter concept more deeply.
2. **Do some in-depth research on your chosen topic** (C-level, adequate research = two important, credible **organizational communication**** research sources per person).
3. **Prepare a riveting activity based upon your research.** The time is yours and you can structure how you like. You might talk for 5 minutes, then jump into a discussion, group activity or class activity. You might assign homework ahead of time (at least 36 hours in advance) and jump straight into the activity. You might lead the class in a game or case study, or take us outside. Whatever works for your group, EXCEPT lecturing straight from the textbook/articles. **No boring powerpoints allowed!** While this is NOT meant to be a formal presentation, you should make sure to cite specific sources so that it is evident your activity is research-driven.
4. **Prepare materials for the class, including:**
 - a. Discussion questions*** (at least 10 open-ended questions)
 - b. A synopsis of your in-depth research (make sure you summarize your outside research, NOT the textbook or class readings. Your synopsis should include important quotes, details, and not just repeat the abstract. It's fine if you organize this like an annotated bibliography, with the citation listed and the synopsis below. To demonstrate group cohesion, organize the synopses alphabetically by author or by theme, rather than listing each person's sources by name.)
 - c. A separate references page for your in-depth research in APA style

Email (via Canvas) these materials to the class by 10 a.m. the Friday before your group leads AND post to the discussion section of Canvas so the class has time to read your synopses.

5. **Turn in a hard copy of your materials to me before class starts.**

Grading criteria:

- **Preparation:** How prepared and organized are activity leaders? Do activity leaders look professional? Appropriate handouts complete and emailed on time? Is it evident that activity leaders have collaborated carefully?
- **New material:** Does the topic presented/discussed complement but not repeat course concepts from the book? Have the activity leaders brought new research to class? Are the research synopses meaningful and interesting?

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- **Dialogue:** How well do activity leaders ask engaging/insightful questions **and** encourage**** dialogue? Do activity leaders ask thought-provoking questions *and* wait for answers? Do activity leaders ask probing follow-up questions?
- **Engagement:** How well does the activity or interactive component connect to org comm concepts/research and enable the class to engage more fully in the material? Is the activity well organized and led carefully by the activity leaders? Is the activity meaningful for learning?
- **Meaningfulness:** How fun/interesting/thought provoking is the activity and discussion overall?

Points Possible: 125

* If your group has a compelling reason to use more class time, let's chat!

** Your outside research should primarily focus on organizational communication scholarly articles, however you may look at management or business communication journals, too. ***Management Communication Quarterly* and *Journal of Applied Communication Research* are good places to start.**

*** Great discussion questions start with open-ended prompts like: "how...", "in what ways..." "compare/contrast..." and "why...", and ask people to reflect, consider, critique, evaluate, give examples, connect concepts.

**** Excellent discussion leaders allow ample time for classmates to think and answer questions, and also ask follow-ups for further information

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do we get to choose our groups?

A: We can negotiate this during the first weeks of class. Typically, classes opt to either choose their groups or choose their topics. Regularly, people will want to sign up for their preferred topic/date (usually a Top 3 situation), and then I will organize people into groups. Sometimes classes will form their groups first, and then negotiate as a class for preferred topics/dates. There have been some epic and complex games of ro-sham-bo for this purpose.

Q: Should our group dress up?

A: Yep. You should look professional. Remember Aristotle's discussion of credibility. You automatically generate credibility when you look professional.

Q: How many sources equals A-level research?

A: It depends. It could be four sources each, lightly covered in the activity. Or three sources each covered in great depth. However many sources you use, make sure they are specifically about organizational communication research.

Q: How do I know if a scholarly article is about organizational communication?

A: It will generally talk about organizational issues and communication in the title, and/or the abstract, and the article will be about some organizational topic. If you get an article from *Management Communication Quarterly*, it is 100% about organizational communication. Sometimes org

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comm scholars will publish in journals outside of Communication Studies, and then you'd want to look up their bios.

Q: Will we be marked down for going just the minimum time, 25 minutes?

A: No way.

Q: Will we be marked down for going over the time limit?

A: No, but unless you make previous arrangements, you might get stopped before your activity is done to allow time for other class business.

Q: What's the thing groups most often get wrong?

A: One of three things, typically. The most common misstep is to simply repeat content from the textbook or common readings, which are often covered during lecture. Sometimes groups forget to cite any sources during the presentation or have an activity that is completely unrelated to their research. Remember, the point of this assignment is to bring new organizational communication research to the class. And on that note, make sure sources are about org comm specifically. I regularly see sources that are about the topic (say emotional labor) but from another discipline like management, psychology, or nursing, or an article is about communication, but not about organizing (typically, media/PR, or education).

The second most common problem is that groups frequently underestimate how long activities take, especially the logistics and going over directions. Consider asking the class to read something in advance, or post directions to Canvas. Chat with me about timing, if you're concerned.

And last, the third most common issue is about technology. While boring powerpoints are not allowed (seriously!), groups will sometimes want to use visual aids or show videos, but don't try out the technology in advance. Make sure you know how the classroom technology works in ADVANCE of your presentation. And if you need to borrow an adaptor or laptop, let me know at least the class period before.

Q: How many people are in the class?

A: 25, not including the professor

Q: Can we play games?

A: Sure. So long as you can tie the game to your research and learning a concept.

Q: Will the professor play along?

A: If you want me to, absolutely!

Q: Should we provide incentives?

A: It's not required, but always helps. It's amazing what people will do for candy or donuts. :)