

Communication for the Public Good

Senior Colloquium COMM 550 Fall 2020

Nichols 311 and Zoom

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Instructor

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Nichols 208

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Course Location

Class will occur synchronously (unless noted otherwise) regardless of how you engage in class. This will include in-person attendance in Nichols 311 as well as [Zoom](#). You will also be to fully participate in class from a distance for any reason. We will use the following meeting ID and passcode throughout the semester.

Zoom: <https://ksu.zoom.us/j/92072207211?pwd=U3hkNUtGK2hXZGxvVHh0clpEOXBrQT09>

Meeting ID: 920 7220 7211

Passcode: 284284

One tap mobile

+12532158782,,92072207211# US (Tacoma)

+13462487799,,92072207211# US (Houston)

University Statements and Resources

Statement Regarding [Academic Honesty](#)

Kansas State University has an Honor and Integrity System based on personal integrity, which is presumed to be sufficient assurance that, in academic matters, one's work is performed honestly and without unauthorized assistance. Undergraduate and graduate students, by registration, acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Honor and Integrity System. The policies and procedures of the [Honor and Integrity System](#) apply to all full and part-time students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate courses on-campus, off-campus, and via distance learning. A component vital to the Honor and Integrity System is the inclusion of the Honor Pledge which applies to all assignments, examinations, or other course work undertaken by students. The Honor Pledge is implied, whether or not it is stated: "On my honor, as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work." A grade of XF can result from a breach of academic honesty. The F indicates failure in the course; the X indicates the reason is an Honor Pledge violation.

Statement Regarding [Students with Disabilities](#)

Students with disabilities who need classroom accommodations, access to technology, or information about emergency building/campus evacuation processes should contact the Student Access Center and/or their instructor. Services are available to students with a wide range of disabilities including, but not limited to, physical disabilities, medical conditions, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, depression, and anxiety. If you are a student enrolled in campus/online courses through the Manhattan or Olathe campuses, contact the Student Access Center at accesscenter@k-state.edu, 785-532-6441; for K-State Polytechnic campus, contact Julie Rowe, Diversity, Inclusion and Access Coordinator, at jarowe@ksu.edu or call 785-826-2971.

Statement Defining Expectations for Classroom Conduct

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All student activities in the University, including this course, are governed by the [Student Judicial Conduct Code](#) as outlined in the Student Governing Association [By Laws](#), Article V, Section 3, number 2. Students who engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment may be asked to leave the class.

Statement Regarding Wearing of Face Coverings

To protect the health and safety of the K-State community, students, faculty, staff and visitors must wear face coverings over their mouths and noses while on K-State campuses in all hallways, public spaces, classrooms and other common areas of campus buildings, and when in offices or other work spaces or outdoor settings when 6-foot social distancing cannot be maintained. In addition, all students, faculty, and staff are required to take the [COVID-19 and Face Mask Safety training](#). Employees who need reasonable accommodations and assistance related to required face coverings may contact the ADA coordinator at charlott@k-state.edu, and students needing accommodations may contact the Student Access Center at accesscenter@k-state.edu.

In classrooms, faculty have the right to deny a student entry into the room if the student is not wearing a face covering. Students not wearing a face covering will be reminded to do so and offered a clean face covering, if one is available. If the student does not comply, the faculty member will ask the student to leave the space, and if available, join the class remotely. As a last resort, campus police will be called. The faculty members will complete the [Code of Conduct form](#) and the Office of Student Life will look further into the issue and take the non-compliance with the request to leave into consideration of further accountability measures.

At no point should the professor or other students put themselves into an unsafe situation while attempting to enforce the face-covering policy. Manhattan campus police: 785-532-6412.

Academic Freedom Statement

Kansas State University is a community of students, faculty, and staff who work together to discover new knowledge, create new ideas, and share the results of their scholarly inquiry with the wider public. Although new ideas or research results may be controversial or challenge established views, the health and growth of any society requires frank intellectual exchange. Academic freedom protects this type of free exchange and is thus essential to any university's mission.

Moreover, academic freedom supports collaborative work in the pursuit of truth and the dissemination of knowledge in an environment of inquiry, respectful debate, and professionalism. Academic freedom is not limited to the classroom or to scientific and scholarly research, but extends to the life of the university as well as to larger social and political questions. It is the right and responsibility of the university community to engage with such issues.

Weapons Policy Statement

Kansas State University prohibits the possession of firearms, explosives, and other weapons on any University campus, with certain limited exceptions, including the lawful concealed carrying of handguns, as provided in the University Weapons Policy, found at <http://www.k-state.edu/police/weapons/index.html>.

You are encouraged to take the online weapons policy education module (<http://www.k-state.edu/police/weapons/index.html>) to ensure you understand the requirements of the policy, including the requirements related to concealed carrying of handguns on campus. Students possessing a concealed handgun on campus must be 21 years of age or older and otherwise lawfully eligible to carry. All carrying requirements of the policy must be observed in this class, including but not limited to the requirement that a concealed handgun be

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completely hidden from view, securely held in a holster that meets the specifications of the policy, carried without a chambered round of ammunition, and that any external safety be in the “on” position.

If an individual carries a concealed handgun in a personal carrier such as a backpack, purse, or handbag, the carrier must remain within the individual’s exclusive and uninterrupted control. This includes wearing the carrier with a strap, carrying or holding the carrier, or setting the carrier next to or within the immediate reach of the individual.

Each individual who lawfully possesses a handgun on campus shall be wholly and solely responsible for carrying, storing and using that handgun in a safe manner and in accordance with the law, Board policy and University policy. All reports of suspected violation of the weapons policy are made to the University Police Department by picking up any Emergency Campus Phone or by calling 785-532-6412.

Campus Safety Statement

Kansas State University is committed to providing a safe teaching and learning environment for student and faculty members. In order to enhance your safety in the unlikely case of a campus emergency make sure that you know where and how to quickly exit your classroom and how to follow any emergency directives. To view additional campus emergency information go to the University's main page, www.k-state.edu, and click on the Emergency Information button, located at the bottom of the page.

Student Resources Statement

K-State has many resources to help contribute to student success. These resources include accommodations for academics, paying for college, student life, health and safety, and others found at www.k-state.edu/onestop

Hale Library

On May 22, 2018, a fire in Hale Library resulted in significant smoke and water damage. The entire building is undergoing restoration and renovation and will reopen in phases. Most of the first floor will open in early fall 2019 and offer over 400 seats for collaborative and group study space. Most of the second floor will open at the beginning of the spring 2020 semester, and the entire building should be complete by the end of 2020. Library and IT services are still available at various locations across campus and will transition back into Hale Library over the course of the renovation project. Online resources such as databases, ebooks, and journals are available, but most physical collections that were in Hale during the fire will not be available during the 2019-2020 school year. Students should request books and articles that are not available through the Libraries' free interlibrary loan service. They will work to get these items from other libraries for you. For more information about current locations and timelines, visit the Hale Library Recovery website at www.k-state.edu/hale.

Attendance Policy

You are expected to be present for every class. To sustain healthy relationships and roles, everyone needs to show up and actively participate, regardless of class being in-person or remote. Participation is required for discussions and group work. You are expected to read the various texts and engage your fellow students with comments/questions. If you must miss class for a university-sanctioned event, illness, or emergency, notify Dr. Shaffer. Attendance will be taken throughout the semester, largely through participation assignments during class.

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Course Overview

Communication is ubiquitous. It is in the words we say; the gestures we make; the way we engage with an intimate partner, team members, and strangers. Yet simultaneously, we can observe the failing of *good communication* and its impact on us individually and collectively.

This semester is about looking back at what you have learned since you started your formal education at Kansas State University, but it is also about looking forward. You are on the verge of completing your undergraduate degree in Communication Studies. What does that mean? How do you use knowledge and skills to better our world?

This course is a colloquium and we will be committed to that, regardless of how we meet. From Latin, colloqui means ‘to converse’, from col- ‘together’ + loqui ‘to talk’. We will, in robust and scholarly ways, talk together meaningfully. For the discipline of communication that has so many avenues and contexts in which it is applied and engaged, we will explore the diversity of the discipline and some of the factors that influence it today.

An academic discipline is like a field of vision. It is about what and who you train yourself to see, look for, and listen to. It is, fundamentally, a way of engaging others and the world. Other disciplines, appropriately, offer similar orientations to the world. But we will mostly be looking through the lens of communication. Importantly, our common texts push on this field of vision. You should be thinking about these in relationship with the body of knowledge you have engaged and gained throughout your studies. But we are not only reflecting on what you have learned. We are also looking forward as you step into the next phase of your life as a citizen.

For us, we will continuously return to the course theme of “communication for the public good” and you will offer your own response to making that a reality.

Communication for the public good. What does this mean? This semester, you will consider this question. You will draw on your experience in previous courses and your education, more generally, to provide a response to this question and statement. You will make an argument about what communication (in its particular form you choose to focus on) can and/or should do to improve our shared life—to benefit the well-being of the public. Regardless of what element of communication is interesting to you, you can use this commitment and question as a framework to offer a response. This is the goal of this course.

To do this, the course is grounded in and flows from several questions that are not often asked or taken up in serious and sustained ways in college classrooms (or elsewhere):

What’s my story? Who are my people? With whom and for what do I stand? How might I act with others in responsible and effective ways to imagine and build the world I would like to live in? How does authentic communication make that possible?

Doing all of this together, with everyone acting as teachers as well as learners, will not be easy. At times it will be or feel confusing, disappointing, disjointed, contentious, and even painful. But it will or can also be—if we do our work well—enlightening, energizing, encouraging, and inspiring. Even joyful.

Learning Goals

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Upon completion of this course, students will be able to clearly and compellingly answer the following questions:

1. To comprehend the cultural and political dynamics that shape communication and its challenges today.
2. To identify challenges to epistemological issues and how this impacts communication in a democratic society.
3. To understand civic and democratic professionalism.
4. To have appropriate comprehension of the subfields of communication studies and to be able to draw on one to make a contribution to the public good.
5. To draw on communication theory, analyze it, and make claims about how it can improve the public good.
6. Demonstrate the ability to synthesize and critically evaluate information pertinent to communication theory.
7. Demonstrate the ability to effectively present and discuss scholarship.

Books

Dzur, Albert W. *Rebuilding Public Institutions Together: Professionals and Citizens in a Participatory Democracy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017.

<https://www.amazon.com/Rebuilding-Public-Institutions-Together-Professionals/dp/1501721984/>

Keith, William, and Robert Danisch. *Beyond Civility: The Competing Obligations of Citizenship*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020.

<https://www.amazon.com/Beyond-Civility-Obligations-Citizenship-Deliberation/dp/0271087307>

Nichols, Tom. *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

<https://www.amazon.com/Death-Expertise-Campaign-Established-Knowledge/dp/0190865970>

O'Connor, Cailin, and James Owen Weatherall. *The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.

<https://www.amazon.com/Misinformation-Age-False-Beliefs-Spread/dp/0300251858/>

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. 20th Anniversary ed. New York: Penguin, 2005. 1985.

<https://www.amazon.com/Amusing-Ourselves-Death-Discourse-Business/dp/014303653X/>

Additional readings will be posted electronically on Canvas.

Course Work

1. Biographical Statement and Scholarly Path

To help everyone become familiar with one another's interests, experiences, and perspectives, you will write a short (2-4) pages biographical statement. You should also include your Scholarly Path. This statement should include a brief review of previous education and work experience, what led you to study at Kansas State, a brief description of your scholarly (and/or practice) interests, and what you hope to do after leaving Kansas State. Make sure to write about how you came to study communication and what courses played an important part in your development.

2. Readings and Participation

This course is anchored in a set of core readings. Because we will use a seminar and/or workshop (rather than a lecture) format in our class sessions, our collective learning is utterly dependent on everyone carefully and closely reading each week's assignments. The course schedule provided below lists our proposed weekly

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readings. Readings may change in response to the interests and experience of class members and the nature and direction of class discussions.

Seminars and, in particular, colloquia, are based on and rely upon discussion. The success of this course relies up thoughtful and informed participation and you are expected to participate. In our discussions of the readings and your own experiences, we will practice hospitality, participation, mindfulness, humility, mutuality, deliberation, appreciation, hope, and autonomy.¹

Criteria for assessing class participation:

1. Attendance.
2. Engaging in a discussion that is informed by the assigned texts.
3. Focusing on the topic and the texts, which does not preclude drawing connections beyond them.
4. Being responsive to other students. Responsiveness needn't always be immediate, verbal, or occur within the class discussion itself.
5. Building on others' contributions, and sometimes making links among different people's contributions or between what they have said and the text.
6. Demonstrating genuine respect for the others, where respect does not require agreement. In fact, sometimes respect requires explicit *disagreement* because you take the other person's ideas seriously.
7. Taking risks, trying out ideas that you don't necessarily endorse, and asking questions that might be perceived as naive or uninformed.
8. Seeking truth, clarity, or insight (instead of other objectives).
9. Exercising freedom of speech along with a degree of tact and concern for the other people.
10. Demonstrating responsibility for the other students' learning in what you say (and occasionally by a decision not to speak).

At the end of our class sessions, you will be provided a prompt related to the topic of the day. You will submit these brief reflections on Canvas and this will, in part, determine both your attendance and participation.

3. Collaborative Discussion

As we explore questions about how to use communication for the public good, one central element will be the commitment to communication that engages and creates. We are living in an age of increased political, social, and economic interdependence. There is a significant need to think and talk together in productive ways. Yet, modern technology, social trends, and political divisions push us further apart. As we anticipate the problems of the 21st century, we must also anticipate the skills and habits of mind needed to address the complex problems that we face as a society. What skills are necessary to improve the creativity and productivity of groups working together? What skills will improve how we communicate with each other in the workplace and in social life? How do we best harness the knowledge and creativity of groups?

This semester, in addition to course credit for COMM 550, we will participate in the Interactivity Foundation's Collaborative Discussion Certificate program. This will be a class-based set of assignments and learning experiences that will 1) be part of class and 2) allow you to receive an addition certificate. We will explore which is the modules to use together.

4. Communication for the Public Good Project

Each of you will select a topic related to communication and its role in cultivating and sustaining the public good. This is a flexible project, as it will be grounded in *your particular interests in communication*. This project will be your final product from the class. It should be both conceptual and applied. It must attend to the theme of how communication can improve our shared civic life. This is not individual or organizationally focused. You can draw on your interests in rhetorical, relational, interpersonal, nonverbal, political, and/or other subfields of communication. In short, your project will be way for you to demonstrate how communication can

¹ See Brookfield, S., & Preskill, S. (2005). *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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play a role in addressing an issue/challenge and improving the public good through this stated project. For example, how might one think about communication responding to [such an issue](#)? What would it look like to create an interpersonal/intergenerational communication process to have a thoughtful and impactful response to this critique?

Work Distribution

Biographical Statement and Scholarly Path	5% (50)
Readings and Participation	30% (300)
Collaborative Discussion	15% (150)
Communication for the Public Good Project	50% (500)

Grading (%): Total Possible Points 1000

100-90: A 89.9-80: B 79.9-70: C

Date	Topic	Assignment Due	Readings
8/18	Introduction		
8/20	The Public Good	Biographical Statement and Scholarly Path	Price, T. L. (2010). Common Good. In R. A. Couto (Ed.), <i>Political and Civic Leadership: A Reference Handbook</i> (Vol. 1, pp. 137-144). Los Angeles: Sage Publications. London, S. (2003). <i>Higher Education for the Public Good: A Report from the National Leadership Dialogues</i> . Ann Arbor, MI: National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, pp. 19-40. Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). Educating the "Good" Citizen: Political Choices and Pedagogical Goals. <i>Political Science and Politics</i> , 37(2), 241-247.
8/25	Rethinking Professional		Sullivan, William M. <i>Work and Integrity: The Crisis and Promise of Professionalism in America</i> . San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005. Chapter 7, Conclusion. Dzur, A. W. (2017). <i>Rebuilding Public Institutions Together: Professionals and Citizens in a Participatory Democracy</i> . Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
8/27	Professionals and Citizens Together		Boyte, H. C. (2011). Constructive Politics as Public Work: Organizing the Literature. <i>Political Theory</i> , 39(5), 630-660. Shaffer, T. J. (2019). Democratic Professionals in Civic Life: Cultivating Civil Discourse in Community Development. Community Development.
9/1	Introduction to Collaborative Discussion		Hartman, S. W. (2020). <i>Collaborative Discussion Certification</i> : Interactivity Foundation. *Relevant materials via Canvas.
9/3	Collaborative Discussion		Module to be determined by class.
9/8	Collaborative Discussion	Reflection assignment from	Module to be determined by class.

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		Collaborative Discussion #1	
9/10	Reflecting on Collaborative Discussion	Reflection assignment from Collaborative Discussion #2	Discussion about how these contribute to the Communication for the Public Good project.
9/15	Challenges: The State of Public Discourse		Postman, N. (2005). <i>Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business</i> (20th Anniversary ed.). New York: Penguin. Front material – Chapter 5.
9/17		Be prepared to discuss Postman	Postman, N. (2005). <i>Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business</i> (20th Anniversary ed.). New York: Penguin. Front material – Chapter 6-11.
9/22	Misinformation and the Erosion of Democratic Communication		O'Connor, C., & Weatherall, J. O. (2019). <i>The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread</i> . New Haven: Yale University Press. Introduction – Chapter 1.
9/24	Misinformation and the Erosion of Democratic Communication		O'Connor, C., & Weatherall, J. O. (2019). <i>The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread</i> . New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 2-3.
9/29	Misinformation and the Erosion of Democratic Communication	Be prepared to discuss O'Connor and Weatherall	O'Connor, C., & Weatherall, J. O. (2019). <i>The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread</i> . New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 4.
10/1	Who Knows What		Nichols, T. (2017). <i>The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters</i> . New York: Oxford University Press. Introduction – Chapter 2.
10/6	Who Knows What		Nichols, T. (2017). <i>The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters</i> . New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 3-4.
10/8	Who Knows What		Nichols, T. (2017). <i>The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters</i> . New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 5-6.
10/13	Who Knows What	Be prepared to discuss Nichols	Nichols, T. (2017). <i>The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters</i> . New York: Oxford University Press. Conclusion.
10/15	Knowledge and Public Deliberation		Lind, C. J. (2019). Everyday Epistemologies: What People Say About Knowledge and What It Means for Public Deliberation. <i>Journal of Public Deliberation</i> , 15(3), Article 7. Retrieved from https://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol15/iss3/art7 Scudder, M. F. (2020). The Ideal of Uptake in Democratic Deliberation. <i>Political Studies</i> , 68(2), 504-522. doi:10.1177/0032321719858270
10/20	Listening as a Communicative Practice		Lipari, L. (2010). Listening, Thinking, Being. <i>Communication Theory</i> , 20(3), 348. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2010.01366.x Hendriks, C. M., Ercan, S. A., & Duus, S. (2019). Listening in polarised controversies: a study of listening practices in the

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			public sphere. <i>Policy Sciences</i> , 52, 137-151. doi:10.1007/s11077-018-9343-3
10/22	Communication as a Community Building Too		McCoy, M. L., & Heirebacher, S. (2019). Building Capacity in Communities: Everyday Democracy's Dialogue to Change Approach. In N. V. Longo & T. J. Shaffer (Eds.), <i>Creating Space for Democracy: A Primer on Dialogue and Deliberation in Higher Education</i> (pp. 97-109). Sterling, VA: Stylus. Kingery-Page, K. (2019). Local Participation and Lived Experience: Dialogue and Deliberation Through Participatory Processes in Landscape Architecture. In N. V. Longo & T. J. Shaffer (Eds.), <i>Creating Space for Democracy: A Primer on Dialogue and Deliberation in Higher Education</i> (pp. 238-248). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
10/27		Meet about Communication for the Public Good Project	
10/29		Meet about Communication for the Public Good Project	
11/3			Election Day – Civic Holiday
11/5			Keith, W., & Danisch, R. (2020). <i>Beyond Civility: The Competing Obligations of Citizenship</i> . University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
11/10			Keith, W., & Danisch, R. (2020). <i>Beyond Civility: The Competing Obligations of Citizenship</i> . University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
11/12		Be prepared to discuss Keith and Danisch	Keith, W., & Danisch, R. (2020). <i>Beyond Civility: The Competing Obligations of Citizenship</i> . University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
11/17			HOLD OPEN
11/19			HOLD OPEN
11/23	Thanksgiving	Break	Go home and we'll connect soon after to finish up the semester.
11/25	It's still break	Stay home	Wash your hands. And spend just a bit more time in class.
12/1	Project Presentations		You will individually present your Communication for the Public Good project.
12/3	Project Presentations		You will individually present your Communication for the Public Good project.
12/8	Finals		