



## Syllabus for Strategic Communications for Organizational Change

52:533:492:90 SPEC'L TOPICS HRM INDEX 08625

Term: Spring 2026

Mode of delivery: Fully Asynchronous

Professor: David Cheatham

See Canvas course for professional profile

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Office Hours for student conferences: Wednesdays 9-11 a.m. ET on Canvas, or by appointment via phone or Zoom

This Syllabus is a contract between you and Prof. Cheatham that sets expectations, and roles & responsibilities. Participating in this course confirms that you read the Syllabus and agree to abide by requirements and policies listed here.

Delivery is fully asynchronous, online instruction. Some team project work will be conducted online in real-time.

Class weeks run Tuesdays (Day 1) – Mondays (Day 7). Note that our course deliverables and deadlines are not affected by holidays or change in designation of class days.

To fully contribute, you need access to:

- A [Rutgers-supplied Zoom account](#)
- High-speed internet (w/ webcam)
- [Canvas LMS](#)
- [Burke, W. \(2018\) \*Organization Change: Theory and Practice\*, 5th Ed., SAGE Publications, Inc.](#)
- [Lewis, L. \(2019\) \*Organizational Change: Creating Change Through Strategic Communication\* 2nd Ed., Wiley](#)

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### Key Spring 2026 Dates

Spring 2026 classes begin:	Tuesday, January 20 <sup>th</sup>
Last day to add a class:	Thursday, January 29 <sup>th</sup>
Spring 2026 Recess	Saturday, March 14 <sup>th</sup> – Sunday, March 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Last day to withdraw with a "W"	Monday, March 23 <sup>rd</sup> ( <b>subject to change</b> )
Last day of classes	Monday, May 4 <sup>th</sup>

Reading Days (no exams)  
Final Exam period

Tuesday, May 5<sup>th</sup> and Wed. May 6<sup>th</sup>  
Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup> – Wed. May 13<sup>th</sup>

## Course Description

52:533:492:90 SPEC'L TOPICS HRM *Strategic Communications for Organizational Change* (3) builds foundational knowledge of change messaging to help business leaders make more effective managerial decisions. **We explore change management theories, models and frameworks, research studies, and related concepts of organization change management (OCM) that inform best-practices in communicating change.** The course is conducted as a combination of team-based learning, 1:1 coaching, and moderated discussion with emphasis on (a) selected readings and multimedia to be consumed prior to each module and (b) co-teaching of module content by assigned teams.

Coursework culminates in a strategic communications plan for a large-scale change for each student's organization of choice.

Whether you are called on to join a change implementation team, or work with a change practitioner, or support your HR team, or guide your small business, *Strategic Comms for Organizational Change* will enhance your ability to contribute for genuine social impact. Change is inevitable, but transformation is your choice.

**Prerequisite: None**

## Course learning Objectives

Students are expected to comprehend, apply and demonstrate through class discussions, video Master Classes, assignments, and quizzes, the following:

- Major drivers of organizational change.
- Importance of effectively communicating change to sustain organizational health.
- Concepts of organizational change theory and their implications in real-world applications.
- Linkages between practical experiences and the theories and strategies of organizational change communications.
- Principles of leading change, planning change, resistance to change, and communicating change.
- Role leadership plays in anticipating, planning and navigating organizational change.
- Foundational knowledge of change messaging to make more effective managerial decisions.
- Strategies and tactics for communicating change effectively.
- Power of the narrative in strengthening the case for change, and making meaning in change implementation.
- How to promote and protect your personal and professional brands.

## School of Business-Camden UG Program Learning Goals

**Learning Goal: Critical Thinking and Analytical Decision Making.** Students will be able to critically use information and data to analyze, interpret, and solve business problems.

**Learning Goal: Communication Impact and Effectiveness.** Students will demonstrate effective oral and/or written language skills.

**Learning Goal: Teamwork and Interpersonal Relations.**

Students will develop interpersonal skills and demonstrate the ability to work effectively in teams.

**Learning Goal: Ethical Reasoning.** Students will realize that organizations and their actions affect different stakeholders; they will demonstrate the ability to identify and weigh the ethical implications of these actions.

## Required course material

- [Burke, W. \(2018\) \*Organization Change: Theory and Practice\*, 5th Ed., SAGE Publications, Inc.](#)
- [Lewis, L. \(2019\) \*Organizational Change: Creating Change Through Strategic Communication\* 2nd Ed., Wiley](#)
- Additional content, including original articles by Prof. Cheatham, and Master Class videos, are posted to course Canvas
- All course materials can be obtained via Canvas. You are encouraged to access this course via Canvas several times a week. Our course weeks start on Tuesdays (Day 1) and end on Mondays (Day 7) to maximize weekends for team activities, and to give flexibility for full-time working students.

To fully contribute, students need reliable Internet Access, proficiency in Canvas LMS, working knowledge of Microsoft Office programs (e.g., MS Word, MS PowerPoint), a University-supplied email account, and a University-supplied Zoom account.

## Diversity Statement

This class strives to be an inclusive community, learning from the many perspectives that come from having differing backgrounds and beliefs. As a community, we aim to be respectful to all. We reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including but not limited to those based on age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. Faculty and students are expected to commit to creating an environment that facilitates inquiry and self-expression, while also demonstrating diligence in understanding how others' viewpoints may be different from their own.

Our goal as a learning community is to create a safe environment that fosters open and honest dialogue. We are all expected to contribute to creating a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment. To this end, classroom discussions should always be conducted in a way that shows honor, respect, and dignity to all members of the class. Moreover, disagreements should be pursued without personal attack and aggression, and instead, should be handled with grace and care. This will allow for rigorous intellectual engagement and a deeper learning experience for all.

## Pronouns

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. Feel free to correct me on your preferred gender pronoun. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact your Professor.

## Chosen Name (Preferred Name)

If you have a chosen name or preferred name other than what is listed on the roster, let me know.

## COMMUNICATION and USE OF CANVAS

### EMAIL: USE YOUR RUTGERS EMAIL ADDRESS

All communications to students will be done using the Rutgers email address provided to you. Please forward your Rutgers email to your personal email if necessary.

**Not checking your Rutgers email is not an excuse for missing any communications.**

### CANVAS

Canvas is the learning management system (LMS) used for this course. Posted will be the syllabus, resources, Power Point slides, announcements, guides, etc. To access this system, go to <http://canvas.rutgers.edu> log in, and click on the course in the dashboard. For technical support 833-648-4357 or [help@camden.rutgers.edu](mailto:help@camden.rutgers.edu).

## COMMUNICATION

### Course Materials:

All course materials can be obtained via Canvas. You are encouraged to access this course via Canvas several times a week. Our course weeks start on Tuesdays (Day 1) and end on Mondays (Day 7) to maximize weekends for team activities, and to give flexibility for working students.

### Professor Communication:

Use our course Canvas in-box to send me messages. If you do not hear from me within 48 hours, please re-send your message.

You may contact me at any time through our Office Hours Discussion board in Canvas for **course-related questions and comments**. Use Canvas in-box for questions about your **individual performance**.

## CLASSROOM POLICIES

### Exam, Quizzes, Assignment Make-up Policy

**Make-up Work Policy:** If, for a university-approved reason, you cannot complete a quiz, assignment, or exam during the scheduled time, you must give me written notice via the course Canvas in-box at least one week in advance so that other arrangements can be made. If the situation does not allow for advance notification (e.g., emergency hospitalization), contact me as soon as possible after the missed work and provide written documentation. The ability to make up work for non-university approved reasons is not guaranteed. The professor reserves the right to request written documentation to support your absence (such as a doctor's note, an obituary, or military orders).

**Late Work Policy:** All work must be completed and uploaded to Canvas by the specified due date (with the exception of a university-approved, documented, and professor or Dean of Students-verified reason; see Make-up Work Policy above). Any work submitted after the due date and time will receive a reduction of one full letter grade for each day that it is late.

**Incompletes:** "Incompletes" will only be given through prior consultation, under extreme circumstances, and when completion of the course requirements in question would substantially improve your grade. In the rare event when an "incomplete" is given, you must submit all of the agreed-upon work to me by the Rutgers registrar deadline to avoid the "incomplete" converting to an "F": <https://registrar.camden.rutgers.edu/gradeinstruction#incomplete>.

### Assessment

Discussion Posts	25%
Module Quizzes	20%
Team Take-Aways/Co-Teaching	25%
Professionalism	10%
Position Paper	20%

## Grading Methodology/ Letter Grade Description

A Highest grade (90% and above)

B+ Work of distinction (<90% to 87%)

B Work of distinction (<87% to 80%)

C+ Average work (<80% to 77%)

C Average work (<77% to 70%)

D Passing, but unsatisfactory (<70% to 60%)

F Failure without credit (Below 60%)

Note: Alerts will be issued to students through Raptor Connect around mid-term to flag class performance/ attendance. This is a University requirement. For details, see <https://success.camden.rutgers.edu/raptorconnect>

## GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

You must refer to course content (textbook, Master Class, team project content, etc.) when addressing Discussion questions, exams, and all other Assignments, to earn full credit.

**Discussion Board activity** (6 posts plus replies to colleagues). (Individual grade)

One post of your video responding to TED Talk and Framing questions, and 5 posts to share feedback on your peers' position papers. See Discussion post evaluation criteria on Canvas and under Position Paper assignment below.

In addition, students are required to post comments about their team's Take-Aways to encourage conversation, and to reply to colleagues' Take-away questions and comments when other teams are co-teaching. **Aim for 250 words for your initial comments and 150 words for replies.**

**See Course Cadence for deadlines associated with each week's Discussions—for teams and individuals.**

**QUIZZES (5) (Individual Grade)**

Quizzes are designed to ensure that you are keeping up with Module readings. There will be no make-up Quizzes.

**EVALUATION OF MASTER CLASSES (INDIVIDUAL GRADE)**

Expert practitioners conduct Master Class conversations that extend course concepts and themes. You are required to complete an evaluation of each Master Class interview as part of your Professionalism grade.

**PROFESSIONALISM (INDIVIDUAL GRADE)**

You will be evaluated on your professional approach, ability to meet deadlines, respectful approach toward your colleagues, work ethic and overall contribution to our course, both as an individual student and team member.

**Your goal is to encourage Deep Learning which leads to genuine social impact.** Here is an "Easter Egg": What is the first sentence of my LinkedIn profile About section? <https://www.linkedin.com/in/davidcheatham/> Send me the sentence through Canvas in-box.

**CO-TEACHING/TAKE-AWAYS /TEAM-BASED LEARNING (TEAM GRADE)**

Students will collaborate in assigned Co-Teaching Teams throughout the semester. You are encouraged to sign up for a free University-provided Webex account so that you can conduct regularly-scheduled team meetings:

<https://it.rutgers.edu/webex/knowledgebase/how-to-create-your-webex-personal-account/>

Teams will synthesize Module content into Take-aways and lead class discussions on those Take-aways. Take-aways are not module recaps, rather, they are insights ("a-ha moments") from students about module content and

related discussion posts that amplify and clarify module objectives. The most effective Take-aways tie into current events and the academic and/or professional experience of team members.

**Your Module Take-Away presentation must be a narrated PowerPoint. All team members are expected to help narrate.**

Limit 5 slides per presentation:

Slide 1: Cover

Slides 2-3: Highlights of selected concept(s)/insights from module, and why chosen

Slide 4 : How this concept(s) affects day-to-day work of communications, HR practitioners and business owners/leaders

Slide 5: Discussion questions for class discussion (questions you are asking colleagues to comment on).

Part of your grade is based on how well you involve the class in your team's discussion. You are encouraged to use the deck as the foundation of a multi-media presentation for co-teaching your **Module**.

**See Course Cadence for deadlines associated with each week of Discussions—for teams and individuals.**

#### **MVT (MOST VALUABLE TEAMMATE) AWARD**

Each team to vote in April to choose its MVT based on his/her overall contribution to team success. Each MVT will earn 5 points added to his/her team-based learning grade.

#### **CHANGE COMMUNICATIONS POSITION PAPER (INDIVIDUAL GRADE)**

Your position paper will emphasize application of concepts. You will research an organizational change scenario and recommend a plan of action using best-practices in strategic change communications.

Each student will write a position paper analyzing a significant organizational change reported in the recent news. The change may be in the near future or currently taking place. Minimum 1,500 words. Your change scenario must be pre-approved by Prof. Cheatham. Your paper is worth 20% of your course grade, and is due beginning of Module 06.

Take a position: What communications strategies should the organization adopt to make the change more effective, less disruptive and undertaken with less risk? Use the stakeholder change model (Lewis) for your framework. Your paper will include the following: 1) Explain the business scenario, including reason(s) for the change 2) Analyze the positive and negative aspects of the change—who benefits and who does not? 3) Conduct a stakeholder analysis. 4) Recommend communications objectives and strategies 5) Recommend specific actions that change leaders should take in communicating the change. 6) Recommend metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of change messages.

You are encouraged to analyze your current organization or one for which you wish to work.

Cite at least 3 of our course readings in your analysis and 3 new references which you found on your own. Use APA format style. For a refresher on APA style, see Purdue University Writing Lab: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/general\\_format.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html)

All students are required to read and post a response to at least 3 peer papers.

Your posts will be graded based on how well you meet these criteria:

<b>Exceeding Expectations</b> 100 points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Post comprehensively addresses the topic, adds value to discussion with stimulating posts</li><li>• Posts in-depth, incisive reflections that demonstrate critical thinking; shares real-world experiences and examples</li><li>• Well-written posts made within required timeframe; no grammar/spelling errors</li></ul>
<b>Meeting Expectations</b> 80-90 points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Posts are on-topic, relevant, and contain original content</li><li>• Posts elicit reflections from and/or build on ideas of others; show evidence of knowledge and understanding of content, may include occasional examples</li><li>• Posts use complete sentences and rarely have grammar/spelling errors</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deadlines are met consistently</li> </ul>
<b>Emerging Towards Expectations</b> 70 points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posts are on-topic, but may lack originality and/or fail to elicit reflections from or build on ideas of others; examples may be made but may be irrelevant or unclear how they connect to course content</li> <li>• Posts may contain multiple grammar/spelling errors</li> <li>• Deadlines are not respected</li> </ul>
<b>Below Expectations</b> 10-60 points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posts do not contain enough reference back to original topic or may not address the issue at hand sufficiently</li> <li>• Little evidence of knowledge/understanding of course content is shown; examples missing</li> <li>• Posts contain incomplete sentences and/or may not adhere to standard English grammar/spelling</li> </ul>
<b>Cannot Judge (Missing)</b> 0 points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student did not complete discussion board question.</li> </ul>

## Disability Services/Accommodations

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>.

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you and your Professor with a Letter of Accommodations. Please discuss the accommodations with your Professors as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, complete the [registration form](https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration) (<https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration>)

Field Code Changed

## Academic Integrity

The Academic Integrity policy can be found at <https://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/processes/university-code-student-conduct> <http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/student-conduct-processes/academic-integrity/>

Rutgers University takes academic dishonesty very seriously. By enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for familiarizing yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy and the possible penalties (including suspension and expulsion) for violating the policy. As per the policy, all suspected violations will be reported to the RU-Camden Dean of Students.

Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to):

- cheating
- plagiarism
- aiding others in committing a violation or allowing others to use your work
- failure to cite sources correctly
- fabrication
- using another person's ideas or words without attribution
- re-using a previous assignment
- unauthorized collaboration
- sabotaging another student's work

If in doubt, consult your Professor. Please review the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Information is also available at the RU-Camden Dean of Students site: <https://camden.rutgers.edu/deanofstudents/academic-integrity>

## Use of plagiarism detection

Turnitin, plagiarism detection software, is integrated into our course Canvas. Turnitin is used on all writing Assignments.

### Turnitin Color-Coding Breakdown

Blue (0%): No matching text was found in the Turnitin database.

Green (1-24%): A low percentage of matching text was found.

Yellow (25-49%): A moderate amount of matching text was identified.

Orange (50-74%): A high level of matching text was found, potentially indicating issues with originality.

Red (75-100%): A very high percentage of matching text was found, indicating significant potential issues with plagiarism.

## Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI can be a valuable learning tool when used thoughtfully, but it should not replace independent learning. Research indicates that overreliance on AI use can weaken critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and professional judgment—skills vital for academic success, career advancement, and job competitiveness.

## Acceptable and Unacceptable Use of AI

The use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Dall-e, etc.) is **permitted** in this course for the following activities:

- Brainstorming and refining your ideas
- Fine-tuning your research questions
- Finding information on your topic

The use of generative AI tools is **not permitted** in this course for the following activities:

- Impersonating you in classroom contexts, such as by using AI to compose Discussion board prompts assigned to you or content that you put into a Zoom chat
- Completing work that your team has assigned to you
- Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts
- Writing a draft of a writing Assignment
- Writing entire sentences, paragraphs or papers to complete course assignments

You are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI query (for instance, that it does not violate intellectual property laws, or contain misinformation or unethical content). Your use of AI tools must be properly documented and cited in order to stay within university policies on academic honesty. Any assignment that is found to have used generative AI tools in unauthorized ways based on guidelines in this syllabus, will be subject to report of a violation of Academic Integrity and thus the appropriate adjudication. When in doubt about permitted usage, ask for clarification.

Unauthorized or unacknowledged collaboration, or the presentation of another's work as your own, is a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy. If you are unsure about whether particular uses of AI or Gen AI tools may be plagiarism, cheating, or another form of academic dishonesty, please reach out to me to discuss as soon as possible.

It is expected that all work students submit for this course will be their own. In instances when collaborative work is assigned, we expect for the assignment to list all team members who participated. Different classes may implement different AI/Gen AI policies, and it is the student's responsibility to conform to expectations for each course.

## Academic Freedom

Faculty and students alike are free to express their viewpoints at appropriate times in class, including perspectives that differ from most in the Rutgers University community. Students may be exposed to views they find challenging, uncomfortable, or distressing. But, since Rutgers is a public institution, First Amendment speech protections apply. Legally, feelings of discomfort are not sufficient to restrict speech. Pedagogically, exposing people to different ideas—even challenging their most deeply held beliefs—is a feature, not a flaw, of academic life. Free inquiry is essential to a robust learning environment. Students and professors are at our best—and best able to contribute to society—when we are exposed to a wide range of challenging ideas.

## University Code of Conduct

Rutgers University-Camden seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community, including in classroom

space. As a student at the University, you are expected adhere to the Code of Student Conduct.

To review the Code of Conduct and Title IX policy go to [RU-Camden Dean of Students Office](#)

Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "*engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities.*"

### **Expectations of Course Civility (online or in-person)**

*(source: the Assoc of College and University Educators)*

The following protocols on the codes of behavior reflect professional business norms on manners, courtesy, and respect.

**In general, you should treat others as you would like others to treat you. Be mindful that what is acceptable in a text or chatroom with friends may not be appropriate in a classroom or in an online conversation with your colleagues or Professor.**

- Participation is a necessary part of this course. You will earn no credit for Discussion / Activities that you don't participate in.
- You are expected to do your own work. Cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in referral to the University for potential disciplinary action.
- Meaningful and constructive dialogue is encouraged in this class and requires a willingness to listen, tolerance for different points of view, and mutual respect from all participants. All course members will be expected to show respect for individual differences and viewpoints.