Eng2962: Communication Contexts

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Description and Objectives

Eng2962 is the first of three communication modules offered by the Humanities department for students enrolled in the Engineering Initiative program at Michigan Tech. This one-hour course is designed to help student members of enterprise teams study the communication contexts and practices of their teams. It is my hope that you will develop a beginning understanding of concepts such as knowledge construction, discourse communities, genre, communication patterns, group hierarchies, and audience. It is my belief that developing this understanding will serve you not only in this course or in your enterprise group, but also later as you enter the professional world of engineering.

Texts

- Reserved Readings as assigned

Policies

- Papers are due at the beginning of class on the day they are due. They are to be in type-written format and should reflect professional standards.
- In-class exercises cannot be made up. However, if you know you are going to be gone, contact me ahead of time and I’ll make an alternative assignment so that you do not miss class participation points.
- Each member of a group project receives the same grade as everyone else in the group. The group is self-governing; however, if a group determines that one of its members is not pulling his or her weight, the group, the accused member, and the teacher will meet to discuss the problem, and, if need be, determine how to alter the grade.
- Every student is to keep a logbook in which to record observations about their enterprise’s communication practices.
- Every student is required to hand in a portfolio consisting of
  1. 2 memos assigned in class
  2. a random selection of ten photocopied pages from the observation log
  3. an essay discussing his or her participation in the enterprise project, participation in the group writing and speaking projects, acquisition of concepts and competencies through reading and class activities.
- Failure to hand in the portfolio will result in an “Incomplete” grade.
- MTU’s policy regarding discrimination or harassment comply with all federal and state laws. If you have disability and need reasonable accommodation for equal access to education and services here at MTU, please contact Dr. Gloria Melton in the Dean’s Office (phone 7-2212). If you have other questions concerning either discrimination or harassment, you may speak with your instructor, your advisor, a department chair or the Affirmative Action officer (phone 7-3310).

Grading

First Memo 20%
Second Memo 20%
Analysis Report 20%
Oral Report 15%
Participation 25%
Tentative Schedule for Class

Week One (January 14-18)
• Introduction to class and materials
• Assignment: for next week, write a one-page paper explaining your interest in your particular enterprise project and explain how it might help you some day in your professional life as an engineer.
• Do reserve reading and come to class prepared to discuss (Baker "Toward Establishing a Rhetoric of Engineering:"

Week Two (January 21-25)
• Discussion of rhetoric, knowledge, and communities based on Baker’s article
• Assignment: for next week, read chapters 1 and 2 in *Communication Interaction* (CI). Take notes and come prepared to discuss it. Make entries in your observation log describing members of your engineering team.

Week Three (January 28-February 1)
• Discussion of participating in communication contexts based on chapters 1 and 2 of CI
• Assignment: for next class, keep an observation log with the following two categories: (1) construction of knowledge through language, and (2) communication patterns in my enterprise group. Make observation notes of everything you see that fits into one of these two categories. Before class next week, summarize your observations and draw conclusions about them in a memo to the teacher.

Week Four (February 4-8)—no class because of Winter Carnival

Week Five (February 11-15)
• *Memo on knowledge construction and communication patterns due*
• Discussion of knowledge construction and communication patterns based on observation logs.
• In-class writing: What have you been learning in this class the last couple weeks, and what will this learning enable you to do that you wouldn't be able to do without it?
• Assignment: For next week, read reserved reading on genre by Berkenkotter and Huckin. Take notes and come prepared to discuss it.

Week Six (February 18-22)
• Discussion of genres based on Reserve Reading
• Assignment: For next week, read chapters 3 and 4 in CI. Take notes and come prepared to discuss it. Record observations in your log about listening and feedback habits of members in your group.

Week Seven (February 25-March 1)
• Discussion of observation, listening, and giving feedback based on chapters 3 and 4 of CI
• Assignment: For next class, keep an observation log in which you take notes on (1) the hierarchical structure of your enterprise group, and (2) the range of documents written by members of your enterprise group with special focus on one example. Before class next time, write a summary of your observations in a memo to the teacher and attach a photocopy of a one-to-three-page document written by someone in your group. Make sure your memo discusses this document (name its genre, explain its purpose, describe the situation, writer, and audience).

Spring Break (March 4-8)

Week Eight (March 11-15)
• *Memo on group hierarchy, genres, listening, and feedback due*
• Discussion of enterprise group genres and feedback patterns based on observation logs.
• In-class writing: What have you been learning in this class the last couple weeks, and what will this learning enable you to do that you wouldn't be able to do without it?
• Assignment: For next week, read reserved reading concerning audience. Take notes and be prepared to discuss it. In your logs, record your impression of the various internal and external audiences that exist for your group. Describe the audiences' characteristics and needs.

Week Nine (March 18-22)
• Discussion of audience based on reserved reading
• Assignment: For next week, read chapters 5 and 6 in CI. Take notes and be prepared to discuss it. Read back through your log and write an entry that summarizes what keeping the log has taught you about the group and its communication practices.

Week Ten (March 25-29)
• Discussion of Interviewing and Recording skills based on chapters 5 and 6 of CI
• Assignment: For next week, interview a member of your enterprise group about the various audiences he or she can think of within and without the group for the group's communication. Write a memo to the teacher (1) reporting the results of your interview (be sure to include whom you interviewed and something about that person's role in the group) and (2) your own thoughts about audiences within and outside the group.

Week Eleven (April 1-5)
• Memo on audience reporting interview results due
• Discussion of groups' audiences based on observations and interviews
• In-class writing: What have you been learning in this class the last couple weeks, and what will this learning enable you to do that you wouldn't be able to do without it?
• Assignment: For next week, read reserved reading regarding collaboration. Take notes and come prepared to discuss it. Record observations in log about your group's teamwork patterns.

Week Twelve (April 8-12)
• Discussion collaboration and negotiation as process of socially constructing texts based on reserved reading on collaboration.
• Discussion of written and oral reports due at end of semester (group projects)
• Assignment: For next week, read chapter 8 in CI. Take notes and be prepared to discuss it. Meet with group and plan work on two final projects.

Week Thirteen (April 15-19)
• Discussion analysis and synthesis and of writing an analysis report based on chapter 8 of CI
• Assignment: For next week, read chapters 9 and 10 of CI. Meet with group, divide up jobs, and get started writing the analysis report and planning the oral report.

Week Fourteen (April 22-26)
• Discussion of oral reporting based on chapters 9 and 10 of CI.
• In-class analysis of technical document
• Assignment: Written analysis report and portfoliois due next week. Also oral reports will be given next week.

Week Fifteen (April 29-May 3)
• Analysis Report due (in portfolio, along with other required materials)
• Oral Reports to be given