

SUST 535: Internal Communication for Sustainability Professionals

Summer 2026

Instructor Information

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General Course Information

Employees have long been recognized as the No. 1 stakeholder of the organizations. Especially in this increasingly connected, globalized, and transparent digital age, the line between internal and external is blurred. Effective internal communication is critical for the success of an organization.

This 1-credit, online graduate course focuses on the influential roles that communication managers play to address the issues, challenges, and opportunities facing internal stakeholders. It integrates theories, research insights, practices as well as current issues into a comprehensive guide for future internal communication managers and organizational leaders on how to communicate effectively with internal stakeholders, build beneficial relationships, and engage employees in the fast-changing business and media environment.

Required Texts and Materials

You should invest in the following text for this online graduate course:

- **[“Excellence in Internal Communication Management”](#) by Rita L. Men & Shannon A. Bowen (ISBN: 978-1631576751)**

This book integrates theories, research insights, practices, as well as current issues and cases into a comprehensive guide for internal communication managers and organizational leaders on how to communicate effectively with internal stakeholders. Important topics such as engagement, trust, change communication, new technologies, leadership communication, ethical decision making, transparency and authenticity, and measurement are discussed. The book concludes with predictions of the future of internal communications research, theory development, and practices.

You will have several reading ‘checks’ throughout the summer associated with these required texts. Additionally, you will view supplemental online texts and resources via links in Canvas.

You should have access to personal storage space. There are numerous options: Google Drive, Dropbox, Microsoft OneDrive, external devices, etc. You should get in the habit of saving your work in multiple locations in the event of computer hard-drive failure.

Finally, you’re expected to have access to and familiarity with American Psychological Association (APA) Style protocols to guide your written assignments.

You can opt to purchase the actual Style manual and/or you can find most protocols and explanations at the [Purdue University Online Writing Lab](#).

Intended Course Outcomes

Our primary curricular goals over the next 5 weeks are to:

1. Discuss the basic principles of internal communication management, as related to topics of internal public segmentation, ethics, culture, leadership, communication strategies, channels, and measurement;
2. Create an internal communication plan.

University Policies and Resources

Prerequisites: Enrollment in a graduate program of study. And the desire to learn and engage!

Setup: This graduate course functions as an online-based, asynchronous workshop. As such, we will NOT have a required meeting day/time as that defeats the flexible nature of online pedagogy; however, you are encouraged to seek individual consultation with me via digital (Zoom, etc.) means as necessary. **This is YOUR education — Own. It.**

NOTICE! An online, asynchronous course demands strict discipline; therefore, I strongly recommend that you stay on-schedule with assigned readings and exercises.

It is usually expected that students will spend approximately 2-3 hours of study time outside of class for every one credit hour. Since this is a one-credit-hour course, you should thus expect to study roughly 2-3 hours each week for this course alone. However, this is a general estimate; more or less time may be required depending on other factors such as your comprehension of course concepts or your work ethic.

Writing Statement: Please note: This is a writing-centric, graduate-level course, so *mechanics count* — grammar, syntax, punctuation, literary-style protocols ... all contribute to overall quality of written work. If you are coming into this course without having prior accountability in this regard, i.e., you don't have a writing (or journalism) undergraduate degree or professional background, then the learning curve may be steeper for you, and I encourage you to allow extra time to proofread any/all written assignments or drafts.

Learning Center: The Learning Center offers free tutoring for many courses. We also provide writing and study skills tutoring. Students can make appointments for virtual (Zoom) or in-person (NQ 350) appointments. To make an appointment, visit my.bsu.edu and click on "Navigate" in the Additional Tools section or just download the [Navigate Student app](#). For more information, visit the [site](#), call 765-285-1006 or send an email: learncenter@bsu.edu.

Counseling Center: The Ball State University Counseling Center offers free and confidential services to all students. The Counseling Center is located in Lucina Hall, Room 320. To schedule an appointment, call 765-285-1736. Ball State also offers a 24/7 Crisis Line, which can be

reached at 765-285-HOPE (4673). The Crisis Line is a mental health resource for those who are struggling with any mental health concerns, including thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide.

The Ball State Counseling Center sees students for a variety of reasons, some of which include homesickness, relationship concerns, anxiety, and depression. At your first appointment, you will work with a therapist to create a plan that will connect you with resources that best fit your needs. All Ball State students also have access to several on-demand, self-help resources through a variety of different platforms. All of these resources, including a direct link to the website, can be found [here](#).

Academic Integrity: Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the university community. Academic dishonesty and other forms of academic misconduct threaten the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and will not be tolerated. To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign evaluations of scholastic and creative performance, Ball State University is committed to maintaining a climate that upholds and values the highest standards of academic integrity.

Academic integrity violations include giving or receiving an unfair academic advantage (cheating), presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own (plagiarism), and falsifying academic records. **Unless otherwise indicated, you must work independently by yourself.** Check with me if you are unsure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty. Examples of academic-integrity violations include but are not limited to:

- Using resources not authorized by me / the faculty member (including devices, AI tools, hidden notes, and open books)
- Using commercial study websites to find answers to graded assignments (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero, StudyPool, OneClass, etc.).
- Without the instructor's written permission — giving away, buying, or selling: graded assignments, class notes, exams, study guides, or other course materials to other students or to third-party vendors (e.g., Course Hero, Chegg, 24HourAnswers, etc.).
- Working with another person on any assignment other than authorized group projects.
- Sharing or allowing others to access your files, whether done with permission or not.
- Reusing your own work from another semester, course, or section.
- Sharing answers with others during exams (e.g., passing notes, texting, whispering, gesturing)
- Discussing exam questions and answers with students who have not taken the exam.
- Soliciting others to complete work for you.

You're strongly encouraged to read the [Student Academic Ethics Policy](#) for more information.

As you work on and submit your assignments this semester, please know that using generative AI tools to complete your assignments can be a violation of Ball State's Academic Ethics Policy — unless the AI use is explicitly approved by the faculty member. **In this course, students may NOT submit any work generated by an AI program (such as ChatGPT, etc.) as their own.** Doing so is considered plagiarism. For any assignment(s) where AI use is permitted, I will have guidelines for that use. Work created outside of those guidelines will be considered an Academic

Ethics Policy violation. If a student's grade is adversely affected by an academic ethics violation, faculty are required to report the violation to the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs who oversees the Student Academic Ethics policy and maintains records of its violations.

More information about the reporting process is available [here](#).

BSU & Disability Statement: We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State University and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me / the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates services for students with disabilities; **documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided**. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Freedom of Expression: In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State Community, we treat each person in the Ball State University community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect, and we learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's [Statement on Freedom of Expression](#), the resources on Ball State's [Freedom of Expression webpage](#), and [Ball State's Beneficence Pledge](#).

Add/Drop or Withdrawal: According to Ball State University policy, registration matters and/or withdrawal from a course remains your responsibility.

Dropping or withdrawing from the course may affect your financial aid. Please visit the [Scheduling & Registration](#) web page for additional information.

Grade Disputes: A student who wishes to dispute a final course grade must first try to resolve the matter with me. Per university protocol, I must have your request in writing. I have five business days to respond to you, and if we ultimately cannot resolve the issue, then the student may dispute the grade — again, in writing — with the School director. The student must provide a substantive “supporting argument.” Please view [Section 6.7](#) of the Student Rights and Community Standards Code for supplemental information.

Student Rights: It is your responsibility to be familiar with your rights and responsibilities as a student at Ball State. Please visit the links embedded within this syllabus and the [Student Code](#) to keep yourself informed and knowledgeable. This code includes appendices that contain Ball State's policies on academic dishonesty, policy and procedures for appealing final grades, student leaves for funerals, etc.

Evaluation

20% Aggregate points from completed reading ‘checks’ (primarily the course text =

Men & Bowen (2017) ... but may include other online sources as assigned)

- 60% Weekly written assignments such as (although there may be others):
- Conducting a SWOT analysis
 - Composing an (internal) audience analysis along with applicable goals/objectives
 - Composing key messages & articulating strategy for your eventual plan
 - Identifying tactics & channels for your eventual plan
- 20% Internal Communication Plan:
- Your capstone assignment / final “exam”
 - Will include revised written assignments along with some new components
 - Should offer strategic recommendations grounded by research/data
 - Must include in-text citations & complete reference list c/o APA Style protocols

Specific point values will be made known in Canvas. This graduate course will be graded on a +/- basis, and I will utilize the university grade scale shown below to calculate final grades.

89-87%	B+	100-94%	A	93-90%	A-
79-77%	C+	86-84%	B	83-80%	B-
69-67%	D+	76-74%	C	73-70%	C-
		66-64%	D	63-60%	D-

Evaluation Component Descriptions

The descriptions below represent an honest effort to inform you of what you will complete in the course in order to achieve the intended course outcomes. Parameters may change as the term progresses based on class needs and/or time constraints.

A reminder of the intended course outcomes:

1. Discuss the basic principles of internal communication management, as related to topics of internal public segmentation, ethics, culture, leadership, communication strategies, channels, and measurement;
2. Create an internal communication plan.

Reading Checks — outcome #1: For most reading assignments, I’ll have you complete a 1-page document, noting the text’s main thesis along with what you learned as well as what you don’t understand. Collectively, these ‘checks’ are meant to help you remember what you’ve read and why it mattered, which will become useful for your capstone assignment.

Weekly Written Assignments — outcomes #1, #2: Details for each will be shared in advance via Canvas. Similarly, these should help you focus on the process rather than just the product.

Internal Communication Plan — outcome #2: Due at the very end of the term, this represents your capstone endeavor, so as an overarching outline: You will first need to identify a company or organization in which you’ll examine its internal communication processes and products. From your analyses, research/data, and strategic inference, you’ll offer recommendations and guidance meant for improvement and efficiency. **You are strongly encouraged to pick a**

company or organization already familiar to you, i.e., you currently work there or have recently worked there & thus have abundant access to places and people.

Graduate Seminar Schedule

What follows is a *tentative* schedule of content for the course. I have provided this information to merely give you an idea of the material that will be presented and its approximate placing.

We will make adjustments to this schedule. As such, **you should follow the content order & deadlines listed in the weekly modules in our Canvas site.**

Tentative Schedule

	Read / View:	Topic(s):	TO DO (by Sunday PM...)
Week 1 M, 05/11 – Su, 05/17	Men & Bowen (chapters 1, 10) Additional content in Canvas module	Introduction Background Conducting SWOT Analysis	(check Canvas for specifics)
Week 2 M, 05/18 – Su, 05/24	Men & Bowen (chapters 2, 3, 4) Additional content in Canvas module	Understanding target audience Considering ethical issues Assessing communication styles	(check Canvas for specifics)
Week 3 M, 05/25 – Su, 05/31	Men & Bowen (chapters 5, 6) Additional content in Canvas module	Exploring supervisory communication roles Examining organizational structure & culture	(check Canvas for specifics)
Week 4 M, 06/01 – Su, 06/07	Men & Bowen (chapters 7, 8) Additional content in Canvas module	Defining & boosting employee engagement Considering tactics	(check Canvas for specifics)
Week 5 M, 06/08 – F, 06/12	Men & Bowen (chapter 9)	Producing recommendations for & evaluating an internal communication plan	(check Canvas for specifics)