

**Conference Techniques, Spring 2005
University of the Virgin Islands
Dept of Communications**

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Required Texts:

Xeroxed materials will be handed out in class; other reading materials will be available online at our class BlackBoard site at <http://blackboard.uvi.edu>

Other Required Materials:

A working UVI email address (and knowledge of that address), a calendar, notebook devoted to planning our conference, access to a computer with Web connectivity, folder with pockets to create a portfolio of your work.

Course Description

In this course, we will brainstorm, research, plan and execute a half-day conference that explores students' hopes, concerns and questions about the future of the University of the Virgin Islands. We will learn how the University functions as a networked environment, connecting administration, faculty, staff, students, accreditation boards, taxpayers, politicians, and others. We will focus in particular on various student groups within that network (e.g. working students, part-time students, students from St. Thomas, students from St. Croix, etc.) During class, we will use exercises from the fields of management, acting, sports, and psychotherapy to learn how to turn our group into a "learning teams" (you'll find out what that means in class), and to help others do the same. By the end of the course, you will have experience in the practical skills of event planning, publicity and management. Perhaps even more significantly, however, you will have an understanding of what it means to encourage groups facing geographic, class, race and educational differences to dialogue in ways that are both respectful and productive, encouraging hope, rather than frustration and mistrust.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course, students will demonstrate in their half-day conference a satisfactory mastery of the following:

1. The ability to conceptualize, research, plan, publicize, organize, and facilitate a half-day event on a university campus.
2. Knowledge of the complexities of network theory in general and of university networks in particular. Knowledge of the overlap between student groups in general and UVI student groups in particular. Knowledge of the difference between groups, teams, and learning teams.
3. A familiarity with the difference between quantitative and qualitative analysis, and with the Communication Studies concepts of deep listening, thick description and ethnographic authority.
4. The ability to think about group communication from an interdisciplinary perspective, using techniques from the fields of business, humanities, social sciences and athletics to create “learning teams.”
5. Facility with the latest developments from the field of remote knowledge management: online research, weblogs (“blogs”) and wikis, formal videoconferencing, and Microsoft NetMeeting.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Class meets for 1 hour and 15 minutes twice weekly. Class will consist of short lectures, group discussions and team-based challenges. Learning is measured by students’ follow-through on their assigned tasks toward the half-day conference, by their commitment to the team-based challenges in class, by their individual reflections in their online journals, by their participation in our group journal, and by a final portfolio that will serve as documentation for their role in the semester’s events.

Success and achievement in this course requires attendance, participation, active listening, openness to new ideas and approaches to communication, and the willingness to learn to express oneself both in person and through electronic media.

Student Responsibilities.

As a student, you will be required to do the following:

1. **Attend classes regularly, arrive on time, turn off all electronic devices while in class and stay until the end of the class.** (see specific attendance policies for details).
2. **Participate in class discussions and exercises with honesty, integrity and care for fellow classmates.** During discussions, we follow the principles of “no shame, no blame” and “nothing leaves the room,” so that we can ask hard questions of ourselves and others. We also acknowledge and praise contributions toward our project and teammates who are making progress on personal challenges (and we all have personal challenges.) PLEASE NOTE: We will discuss this in class, but if you find yourself uncomfortable with public critique or praise, let me know, and we’ll figure out a solution. If you don’t feel safe, our team won’t gel, and it is ALWAYS better to say if you aren’t feeling comfortable in an environment early on. Chances are, we are far more adaptable than you think.
3. **Go online AT LEAST every two days to keep an online journal and check the BlackBoard site.** We will learn how to create online journals using the Live Journal system. These will be interactive journals, which means I will respond to what you write there, and your team members can do the same. You can choose whether you’d like your journal entries to be open to anyone on the Web, just viewable by members of our team, or a mixture of both (we’ll learn how to do that in class.) **You are responsible for updating your personal journal, reading our team journal, and checking BlackBoard for information before 10 p.m. the day before each class.** Your journal entry should consist of
 - a. **Notes and impressions** from our last in-class session. I will periodically give **short essay assignments** in class; these should be completed in your journal.
 - b. **Progress report** on your assigned tasks for the half-day conference and at least **ONE question** for the team about your tasks.
 - c. **Reading notes** from Xeroxes or Web links given to you in the previous class and at least **ONE question** for the team about the readings.
 - d. **Any other observations** you want to make. These can be URLs you find online in which you think the team might be interested, names of other students who might be interested in our conference, general

observations about team-building (which exercises you liked, which you didn't) and so forth.

4. **Develop a portfolio of your process in this class.** Some portfolio requests are merely academic; this one is not. What I want you to come away with is a tangible demonstration of your ability to plan, research, execute and document a complex group activity. You should bring this portfolio to future job and graduate interviews as a way to show people that you have analytical, leadership and team-building skills beyond those of most undergraduates. Your portfolio will consist of:
 - a. A printed version of your online LiveJournal
 - b. A printed version of the team LiveJournal
 - c. A "greatest hits" synopsis of your personal and team LiveJournal
 - d. Descriptions of team-building exercises
 - e. Planning materials for the conference
 - f. Publicity materials for the conference
 - g. Photos from the conference
 - h. Other materials TBA

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Although this is a class on team-building, your personal LiveJournal entries and essay assignments must be original. Claiming the work of another person as your own is called plagiarism and is a serious breach of academic integrity. Plagiarism is also a punishable offense at the university and can result in failure in the course as well as dismissal from the university. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

1. Submitting an assignment that has been wholly or partially created by another person.
2. Presenting as your own work the ideas of another person without acknowledgment of the source.
3. Cutting and pasting information from the Internet without proper and complete source citation and a URL where the information can be found.
4. Forgetting to cite your sources.

Any instances of plagiarism will result in immediate failure of the course. If you have any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism, ask the professor. Do not guess, or it may have severe consequences. No academic dishonesty will be tolerated. For additional information, see the section on academic honesty in the University of the Virgin Islands catalog.

Evaluation and Grading:

In this class, I am responsible for assigning half your grade, and you are responsible for the other half.

I will grade on the following:

- Attendance (10%)
- Individual journals (20%)
- Portfolios (20%)

Team members will grade one another on:

- Commitment to in-class discussion and team exercises (20%)
- Contribution to team initiatives regarding the conference (20%)
- Evidence of personal growth and development (10%).

Attendance and Timeliness Policy

- Due to the nature of this course, a great deal of learning takes place during in-class activities. Regular attendance, therefore, IS REQUIRED.
- You are allowed TWO absences, for any reason. Thereafter, any absence, for whatever reason, will lower your course grade 2% per absence. If there are any emergency situations that would necessitate exception to this policy, student MUST give ADVANCE notification of such situations. Without advance notice via phone or email, no exceptions will be granted.
- Regular attendance means **timely attendance**. If you arrive five minutes after the class begins, the team will give you an extra assignment toward our conference planning and execution. Arrival ten minutes after the course begins count as 1/3 absence. Arrivals more than fifteen minutes after the course begins count as 2/3 absence. If you arrive more than fifteen minutes late, you will be marked as entirely absent.

Course Schedule

Course schedule will provided on Tuesday.