

Course Information

Course Number: COMM 446
Course Title: Communication, Organizations and Society
Section: TBD
Time: M-F, May 12 – June 8
Location: Multiple Locations, Belize
Credit Hours: 3

Instructor Details

Instructor: Dr. Anna Wolfe
Office: TBA
Phone: TBA
E-Mail: annawolfe@tamu.edu
Office Hours: immediately following class each day

Course Description

From Catalog: “Communicative processes through which organizations influence and are influenced by the societies from which they draw their members.”

More specifically, this course examines the interrelationships between contemporary Belizean tourism organizations and the communities in which they are situated. Organizations don’t exist in vacuums; they are situated in particular places, times, and cultures. Consequently, all organizations—from scuba diving shops to elite resorts, from nature sanctuaries to Mayan cultural centers—must, to varying degrees, monitor and negotiate their relationship with the people and places that move around, in, and through their organizational boundaries. Indeed, the Belizean tourism industry is a prime example of the way in which communities’ and organizations’ fates are deeply entwined and dependent upon one another. This course introduces students to organizational ethnography as a means of systematically studying these complex relationships. Students will be trained in basic ethnographic methods and engage in fieldwork activities in local organizations. Taken together with case studies and tours of real Belizean organizations, these observations will help students to better understand how organizations and communities interact with each other to create local cultures.

Course Prerequisites

Junior or senior classification or approval of instructor.

Special Course Designation

This course is a “W” (e.g., Writing Intensive course). As such, students are required to pass the writing component of the course to receive a final passing grade for the class.

Course Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Explain fundamental theories and terms related to organizational culture, organizational ethnography, and organization-society relationships;
2. Analyze organization-society cultural dynamics in written reflections;
3. Utilize ethnographic field methods to refine their communication skills including listening, situation-appropriate expression, and appreciation of diverse communication styles;
4. Write ethnographic field notes and case narratives that reflect on the role of organizations in the production of place-based identity and community culture.

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

Readings provided on Canvas.

Grading Policy

Assignments

Fieldwork Exercises (30%)

Students will engage in three different fieldnote writing exercises during this class:

1. Jottings and headnotes
2. Interpreting cultural artifacts
3. Deep hanging out

Each set of fieldnotes will be approximately 500 words and worth 10% of your final grade. Fieldnotes will be submitted for feedback at the end of each fieldwork session.

Writing Workshops: Producing Milestone Assignments (40%)

Four in-class workshops provide support for scaling up from rough fieldnotes to a polished final project:

1. Creating scenes from jottings
2. Moving from scenes to ethnographic narratives
3. Cultivating reflexivity
4. Developing an individual story-map

Students will be tasked with reviewing, revising, and reworking their jottings and fieldnotes to develop them into milestone assignments during these workshops.

Final Project: Mapping Belize's Stories (30%)

Arthur Frank (1995) wrote, "People tell stories not just to work out their own changing identities, but also to guide others who will follow them" (p. 17). In a similar way, the writing assignments for this class will come together to create a collaborative, interactive map "placing" your stories about personally meaningful sites and organizations around Belize. These story-maps archive your own growth, learning, and meaningful moments, but also may be a resource for future Aggies coming to Belize for their own semester abroad.

This assignment requires students to integrate fieldnotes and narratives, building off milestone assignments, to map organizational stories, share insights on the relationship between Belizean organizations and the communities in which they are situated, and reflect on their own experiences of organizational and community culture during the study abroad semester.

Each student will be graded on their development of an individual story-map, which plots the locations of three meaningful sites that contribute to Belizean culture. Using the interactive map-making tool, Felt, students will embed reflexive ethnographic narratives into each site. The goal of this digital storytelling project is to describe three scenes that highlight how organizations and communities interact with each other to create the local culture of Belize. The writing portion of this assignment should add up to no less than 2,000 words and is worth 15% of your final grade.

During the final week of class, students will integrate their individual story-maps into a collaborative map hosting the whole class's meaningful sites. On our last day of class, students will give 10-minute presentations on their projects (worth an additional 15% of final grades), which will include:

1. REFLEXIVITY ON PROCESS
 - How did you feel when you arrived in Belize at the beginning of the course?
 - What stood out to you about the location and the culture?
 - How did your personal background and life experiences influence the places you found to be most meaningful during this study abroad trip?
2. CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANT SITES
 - What three sites did you choose to focus on for the story-mapping assignment?
 - Why did you select these sites?
 - What do these sites teach us about Belizean culture?

Grading Scale

Final grades will be calculated along the following scale:

Letter Grade	%
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	<60

Late Work Policy

All work is due at the designated time and day on the schedule below.

I do not accept late work for an unexcused absence. Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

BELIZE WEEK 2

TUESDAY, MAY 27 | *Billy Hawk Caye*

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Guest Speaker	Understanding Our Context: Garifuna Culture and History
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	READING Debriefing and Discussion	Moberg: “Reading Past from the Present in Hopkins”

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28 | *Billy Hawk Caye*

9:00 am – 11:30 am	Writing Workshop #2 READING	From Scenes to Ethnographic Narratives Emerson et al.: “Writing an Ethnography”
7:00 pm – 9:30 pm	Fieldwork Exercise #3	“Deep Hanging Out” <i>Garifuna drumming, dancing, and storytelling</i>

THURSDAY, MAY 29 | *Tropical Education Center*

8:00 pm – 10:00 pm	Field Observations	Behind-the-Scenes Nocturnal Zoo Tour
--------------------	--------------------	--------------------------------------

FRIDAY, MAY 30 | *Tropical Education Center*

9:00 am – 3:00 pm	Field Observations	Sibun River Hike/Float through Jaguar Paw Cave System
-------------------	--------------------	---

BELIZE WEEK 3

MONDAY, JUNE 2 | *Ambergris Caye or Caye Caulker*

9:00 am – 11:30 am	Writing Workshop #3 READING	Reflexivity: Tourism’s Effects on Local Culture Shaffer: “Performing Backpacking”
--------------------	---------------------------------------	---

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 | *Ambergris Caye or Caye Caulker*

9:00 am – 11:30 am	Writing Workshop #4	“Placing” Local Culture: Organizational Story-Mapping
--------------------	----------------------------	--

FRIDAY, JUNE 6 | *Ambergris Caye or Caye Caulker*

9:00 am – 11:30 am	Class Wrap Up and Final Presentations
--------------------	--

My proposed schedule represents 45 hours for COMM 446. See below:

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY	HOURS	RUNNING TOTAL
May 12	9:00 am – 11:30 am	Lecture/discussion	2.5	2.5 hours
May 19	9:00 am – 11:30 am	Guest speaker	2.5	5 hours
	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	In-class activity	2	7 hours
May 20	8:00 am – 2:00 pm	Fieldwork	6	13 hours
May 21	2:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Lecture/discussion	3	16 hours
May 22	9:00 am – 10:30 am	Guest speaker	1.5	17.5 hours
	10:30 am – 12:00 pm	Debrief/discussion	1.5	19 hours
May 23	9:00 am – 11:30 am	In-class activity	2.5	21.5 hours
May 27	12:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Guest speaker	1.5	23 hours
	1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Debrief/discussion	1.5	24.5 hours
May 28	9:00 am – 11:30 am	In-class activity	2.5	27 hours
	7:00 pm – 9:30 pm	Fieldwork	2.5	29.5 hours
May 29	8:00 pm – 10:00 pm	Fieldwork	2	31.5 hours
May 30	9:00 am – 3:00 pm	Fieldwork	6	37.5 hours
June 2	9:00 am – 11:30 am	Lecture/discussion	2.5	40 hours
June 4	9:00 am – 11:30 am	In-class activity	2.5	42.5 hours
June 6	9:00 am – 11:30 am	Final presentations	2.5	45 hours

University Policies

This section outlines the university level policies that must be included in each course syllabus. The TAMU Faculty Senate established the wording of these policies.

Attendance Policy

As this is a graduate seminar, attendance is expected at each session. The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)).

“The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

“Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one’s work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case” ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below) Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Disability Resources is located in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University’s goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University’s [Title IX webpage](#).

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student’s academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by utilizing available resources and services on your campus

Students who need someone to talk to can contact Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) or call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](#).