Final Exam

Due on Wednesday (December 11th) (Please put it in the drop-box; the drop-box will close at 5pm December 11th)

Answer any four questions. All questions are essay questions and are worth 25 points each. **Questions 2 , 3 , & 5** require you to watch the movie '**Devil Wears Prada.'**.

Please summarize the answers in your own words. Exams are meant to demonstrate your understanding of the concepts and theories. Answers that present sentences straight from the text will not receive any credit. Use quotes from the book only if they are absolutely necessary and follow the proper citation formats.

1. The subtitle of the textbook is "Balancing Creativity and Constraint." Explain this perspective on organizational communication, including its relationship to dialogue. Make sure to offer examples that illustrate your points.

   Throughout the text, we are reminded of the importance of self-governance and empowerment. Employee satisfaction rises when empowered to make decisions. However the text also outlines the pitfalls of over-empowerment, specifically the frustrations associated with role ambiguity. This dialectic of empowerment and role definition parallel the concept of creativity and constraint. While businesses are encouraged to differentiate into selective or innovative niche's they must also balance the constraint of niche demand- a business cannot produce whatever they want (creativity), they must produce what is wanted by the consumers (constraint). The examples continue throughout the text. Managers must be understanding of the needs of employees outside of the workplace, but must also hold employees to clear expectations; maternity leave for pregnant mothers/workload disbursement conflict. It becomes clear that neither free creativity or ruled constraint will produce a successful organizational climate, but that a balance, often situationally moderated must be understood.

2. Explain the four approaches to management outlined in chapter 3 (Classical Approach, Human Relations Approach, Human Resources Approach, and The Systems Approach). What kind of management approach does the organization in the movie, 'Devil Wears Prada', display? Substantiate your answer by providing specific examples from the movie.

   The four approaches to management are classical, human resources, human relations, and systems. Listed in that order the four approaches may be chronologically understood, although all may still be seen in use today. The classical approach stresses clear

hierarchies, division of labor, and does not give any attention to the private life. It is easiest perhaps to think of the military or a factory when thinking of classical management. Human resource management, perhaps one of the largest current management styles, focuses on the utilization of employees/organizational members as resources. Understanding humans as a resource however also means effective use of the resource. Human resources management uses members effectively by understanding the organization's role within the member's private life. While a greater attention to wholistic development, it is often colder and more impersonal than human relations which is affective and relational. Human relations management takes another step in the spectrum of acknowledging the private life of a member from classical management. Human relations management is often very collective, democratic and empowering, focusing on employee development. Systems management is an emerging management style focused on adaptive feedback loops and leadership. While this style of leadership seems the most individually focused, it stresses the role of component parts in creating a total greater than the sum of its parts.

In regards to The Devil Wears Prada, I believe the Runway organization to be a human resources organization. At first inspection this seems very crazy, with the strict and clear hierarchy of editor and chief to first assistant, and Andrea as second assistant. However, I argue that what is happening is a strong understanding and misuse of desired developmental outcomes. Andrea is personally driven for a journalism job, and a need for a positive recommendation from Miranda Priestly. Miranda leverages this drive to her advantage to have Andrea work for the success of the Runway organization. In this way Miranda is placing the developmental needs of Andrea within the operations of the organization (human resource technique). The clear socialization tactics reinforce my belief that the Runway organization is one which has experience encouraging uniformity of its members. The "that is all" statements are used to drive Andrea to work harder, and the scene with Stanley Tucci asking Andrea "Are you even trying?" puts the socialization power into her own hands. This empowerment predicts an outcome, and its correct- by the end of the movie Andrea is Runway.

3. Compare and contrast the major characteristics of the three approaches to organizational culture (practical, interpretive, critical and postmodern).Use one of these approach /lenses for critically examining /evaluating the culture of the organization in the movie "Devil Wears Prada.'

The comparative management cultural view (practical organizational culture) suggests that culture is related to the environment in which the organization is placed. This view is largely supported by the intraorganizational differences between geographic and cultural locations. Where comparative management is passive to the cultural identity

the organization chooses to poses, corporate culture selects, manipulates, and exploits culture for productivity's sake. Comparative management provides a more fluid view of culture, for that however, organizations are challenged to maintain a more solid and established business model. Organizational Cognition seeks dialogue to create a socially constructed and agreeable culture. This is common in regions where several displaced cultures interact peacefully and equally – unfortunately, there are few places within business settings that such cultural equality takes place. Closely related, organizational symbolism creates culture through the unintentional use of language and symbols. Cognition and symbolism are interpretive, in that language or symbols are used to interpret culture and meaning is created. The last view of organizational culture is the critical and postmodern view. This view suggests that in congruence with the theory of relativity meaning is not a knowable, definable, or discoverable value. Critical and postmodern cultural view sees culture in situational chunks, where at times meaning may be shared, where at times meaning may be understood in "islands", and where at times meaning is not understood at all. These three pockets of situational understanding are referred to as the integration, differentiation, and fragmentation perspectives of the postmodern view of organizational cultural management.

In my opinion Runway uses a form of practical organizational culture, more specifically they primarily rely on corporate culture. It would be easy to suggest Runway operates within the fashion culture, but throughout the movie we hear the cultural tension between French Runway and American Runway. And Runway certainly isn't part of the business culture of New York City since the cultural behavior of its members seems foreign and odd to observers such as Andrea and her friends. I also support the practical organizational culture view in regard to Runway because of the form of socialization they use – assimilation. Andrea is forced to assimilate to the corporate Runway culture – so much so that her boyfriend breaks up with her, saying he doesn't know who she is anymore.

4. Karen Ashcraft presents four frames to understand the relationship between identity, gender, and organization. These frames can also be applied to other social categories. Hence, use the four frames to explain the relationship between identity, social class (blue collar vs white collar), and organizations. Make sure to explain each frame by providing specific examples.

5. Based on your reading of chapter 8, what are the characteristics of effective leaders? Would you consider, Miranda Priestley, in the movie 'Devil Wears Prada', an effective leader? Substantiate your answer by applying the relevant characteristics of effective leaders to Miranda Priestley's role as a leader. In addition, what are some suggestions that you would provide Miranda Priestley for improving her performance as a leader?

Effective leadership according to the textbook stresses certain habits – the habits of mind, character, and authentic communication. Habits of mind are certain ways of thinking that prime leaders to contextual understanding. It may be best described as an ability to change cultural positions and view the organization from an external point of view. Habits of character then are the trends of individuals, as leaders, to approach perceived transformational need. Authentic communication is the tie which holds leadership within the field of communication studies. Truly effective leaders must find appropriate ways to manage the organizational messages sent and received by an organization and its members. Effective management of the plain of communication can lead to the increased efficacy of the other habits.

I believe Miranda Priestly is an extremely effective leader. Mrs. Priestly's mind was extremely cunning, as seen by her ability to navigate the turmoil at the end of the movie and find a way to get rid of her replacement. This turmoil also highlights her character to approach the situation – she was so calm Andrea didn't even know she knew, no one knew she knew. And lastly, perhaps the most evident, Miranda Priestly can control the communication field, with authentic communication, although the word authentic should not be taken to mean truthful in this instance. Miranda was able to quickly and effectively assimilate Andrea who was initially extremely reluctant to divest her personal values. The best example of this is when Andrea is unable to fulfill her duties and find a flight back, she is forced to find an unpublished Harry Potter manuscript. This sort of communication of expectation was effective and timely, reinforcing in Andrea her misdeeds. Another repeated example of authentic communication was her "That is all." In those few words she was able to communicate enough meaning to drive specified actions.

6. Explain the concept of team-based organizing. What are some factors that are crucial for ensuring successful team performance? Do you agree with the following statement: " working in teams involves a balance of creativity and constraint"? Substantiate your answer by providing examples.