

# Louisiana State University Communication Studies 2064-3 Small Group Communication Fall 2008

Instructor: Amy Daulton Fannin  
Office: 113B Prescott Hall  
Email: [afannin@lsu.edu](mailto:afannin@lsu.edu)

Phone: (225) 578-6075  
Office hours: T/TH Noon- 1:30 PM

Community Partner: Volunteers in Public Schools, 226-4700, [vips@ebrschools.org](mailto:vips@ebrschools.org)

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## **Required Course Materials:**

Engleberg, I. N. and Wynn, D. R. (2007). *Working in groups* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

## **Course Objective:**

The purpose CMST 2064 is to help students come to a basic understanding of small group communication. We live, work, and play in groups; therefore, it is important to understand how to most effectively and efficiently communicate in these groups. Through a combination of lectures, activities and discussions, this class will help you become a more effective group member. At the end of the semester, students should have mastered an understanding in each of the following concepts:

1. Theories of small group communication
2. Group cohesion
3. Group dynamics and roles
4. Functions of groups
5. Group decision making
6. Problem-solving in groups
7. Conflict in groups
8. And much, much more!!

An additional goal for this semester is a better understanding of civic engagement through the process of working on a book drive for Belfair Elementary. The “beauty” of this project is that it will help young readers develop a love of reading, a passion that can last a lifetime. Not only is this a definite bonus, but working in semester groups to reach this goal will allow us apply the concepts described above to a real life group situation.

## **Service-Learning Description:**

This section of CMST 2064 will be taught as a service-learning class. Bringle and Hatcher (1995) describe service-learning as “a credit-bearing, educational, experience in

which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, and a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility”.

With the help of Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS), our class will work with students at Belfair Elementary School as Reading Friends, helping second and third grade students read. Additionally, as a class we will conduct a book drive for Belfair Elementary. The books will be donated at the end of the semester to the school, along with individual books for each student we have worked with throughout the semester. The class will set the goal for the specific number of books we hope to donate to the school. Grading of the service component is described below.

Rationale: While helping students read may not *immediately* jump out as a topic covered in a small group communication class, the larger goal of helping collect books for these students will help us reach our goals of learning about small group concepts. The problems you encounter, along with the goals you set, conflicts you solve, relationships you establish, and many other dynamics involved in the project will all be addressed in through course concepts and will easily connect to class discussions.

### **Student Requirements:**

*Classroom behavior:* Lately I have noticed a need to remind students of appropriate classroom behavior. I do this not because I do not like fun or want to rule with iron fist, but because allowing you to believe that inappropriate behavior is okay is actually doing the student a disservice. Employers will not respond positively to the types of inappropriate behavior that has become a more frequent occurrence in the classroom. I should not allow you to believe that after you leave the safety of the college classroom it will be okay to act in rude, disrespectful ways in the workplace. That being said, I have outlined expected classroom behaviors for you. The use of cell phones, text messaging, checking email, etc. is rude and inappropriate in class. Turn off all cell phones before entering class. Additionally, if you use a laptop computer, resist the temptation to check your email, read the news, check Facebook, etc. I listen to you while you speak, and I expect the same respect from you while I speak. Similarly, carrying on conversations with classmates during a lecture or when your fellow classmates are speaking is rude and disruptive. Furthermore, if you are too tired to stay awake in class, stay home. Sleeping in class is not okay; if you were to fall asleep on your job you would be fired.

*Tardiness:* Students who arrive 20 minutes after the start of class will not be allowed to sign the attendance sheet and will be counted absent.

*Notes:* Lectures will frequently include material that is not in the textbook. You will be expected to know this material for the exams and assignments. This is another reason you need to attend class on a regular basis; again, your grade will suffer if you miss these notes and do not have the information for the exams and assignments.

*Exams:* Two exams will be given during the semester, a mid-term exam and a final exam. The date of the mid-term exam is listed on the course schedule and the final exam date is listed in the course schedule book.

You **must** take your exam on time unless you are traveling with a university-

sanctioned organization or have a major health or family emergency. Major emergencies include severe illness, hospitalization, or death in the family. Medical conditions such as a cold or a headache are not sufficient reasons to postpone an exam. The common excuses of having airline reservations prior to or work scheduled during an exam time are *not* acceptable grounds for taking an exam early. Please make appropriate arrangements now, while you still have months to plan.

If you need to reschedule an exam due to illness, you must receive my approval **prior to** the time of the exam (unless, of course, you are medically incapacitated). Furthermore, for any rescheduled exam, you must provide written documentation of the authenticity of your excuse.

*Student honesty:* Plagiarism is a completely unethical and unacceptable practice that will not be tolerated on any level. It is an egregious offense to the owner of the material that has been plagiarized, as well as a dishonest form of communication to the audience of a plagiarized piece of work. The University's Code of Student Conduct defines "academic misconduct" as including, but not limited to "cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give an unfair academic advantage to the student" (LSU's Code of Student Conduct, section 5.1, found on Judicial Affairs webpage August 17, 2004).

The penalty for plagiarism or cheating may include failing the assignment, failing the course, or expulsion from the University. All acts of suspected plagiarism will be investigated and will be handled through the proper University channels.

### **Assignments:**

*Service-learning Project:* Each group will have a specific task to complete this semester. Potential tasks include communicating with the school and researching the needs of the library, publicizing the book drive, organizing the book drive, and organizing the book distribution and celebration event at the end of the semester. Groups will be graded on the success of their specific task. For instance, how effectively did the group communicate with the school and community partner? How well organized was the book drive?

Next, students will grade group members on the effectiveness of each group member on the group task. This will be graded on a 25 point scale. Additionally, each student will be expected to read once a week, for at least an hour each week, with his/her assigned student. A minimum of 10 hours throughout the semester is expected; each visit is worth two points, up to 20 points. Attendance logs will be collected at the end of each month and will serve as documentation for your visit.

*Concept Papers:* Two concept papers will be required during the semester. One paper assignment will be about the theories of small group communication; the second paper activity will be about conflict. In these papers, you will be asked to explain concepts and apply these concepts to the service-learning project we are conducting in class. These papers must be a minimum of two pages. Specific details will be provided on Semester Book.

*Group reflection paper:* This two-part assignment asks students to comment on the progress of their assigned groups at two points in the semester, at the mid-point and at the end of the semester. Students are asked to connect specific ideas concerning the group project and group development, cohesion, conflict, etc. The first part of the paper is worth 20 points and should be a minimum of two pages long. The second part of the

paper is worth 30 points and should be a minimum of three pages long. Specific details will be provided on Semester Book.

*Quizzes:* Five 10-point quizzes will be given throughout the semester. These quizzes will generally be unannounced (read “pop” quiz) and will typically serve as review quizzes from lectures covered since the previous quiz. Missed quizzes can not be made up. This includes quizzes that are missed because a student comes in late to class after a quiz has been taken up.

*Social activity:* The first assignment you will be given is a group assignment, and has been a very popular assignment in previous semesters. You must meet with your group outside of class for a social activity that encourages communication. After the activity, each person will turn in a short paper detailing her or his experience during the activity, as well as any initial perceptions gained through the activity.

*Group participation:* Groups are inherently interdependent in nature; this means that that the actions of one group member impacts the entire group. Much of the work done in this class will be done in your groups and will require the full participation of all the group members. Unfortunately, this does not always happen in groups, as many students have realized due to negative group experiences. One group member may have trouble delegating tasks, takes control, and does most of the work. Another group member may slack off, not contribute to group quizzes or group meetings, knowing that the others will pick up the slack. Other numerous problems may occur. All of these problems have negative impacts on groups. In an attempt to ensure that the semester grade adequately reflects the amount of group participation a student has done, I will ask each student to rate his/her fellow group members on a scale of 1-25 at the end of the semester, along with an explanation for each rating. Although this will be a separate grade and separate paper, it will be turned in with the second half of the group reflection paper. More specific instructions will be given closer to the due date of the assignment. You will also evaluate your own group performance throughout the semester, although this will not be calculated into your own group grade.

*Reflection:* Throughout the semester, you will be asked to reflect on your experience as a Reading Friend, as well as your experience working on your tasks in your groups. Some of these will be graded assignments (group reflection papers and concept papers), but others will take place in your groups as group discussions. Participation in the group reflection process should be considered when assigning the group participation graded described above.

*Book Distribution/Celebration:* At the end of the semester, our class will meet at Belfair Elementary School for a celebration event at the school. During this celebration (which one group will be in charge of planning), we will distribute the collected books to the school, as well as individual books to each of the students you have worked with throughout the semester. **Attendance is mandatory.**

*Make up and late policy:* I understand that emergencies occur on days when assignments are due and in these situations you should contact me immediately. Either call my office or email me and include your phone number so I can contact you and we can discuss the situation. Be sure to do this immediately so we can make new arrangements for turning in an assignment at a later time. Additionally, you should be able to present valid documentation (doctor’s note, etc.) the next time you are in class. If

you are able to present a valid university excuse, your grade will not suffer. However, you will not be able to turn in an assignment late without a valid university excuse.

Students cannot make up pop quizzes or other in-class assignments regardless of the reason for the absence, including excused absences.

Late work not associated with an *excused* absence will only be accepted until the end of the next class period after the original assignment due date; additionally, the student's grade on the assignment **will be penalized 25% for tardiness**. Assignments will not be accepted after the next class period following the original due date; the student will receive a "zero" for the assignment grade. **Emailed assignments will not accepted.**

**Disabilities:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitations Act of 1973: If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a coordinator in the Office of Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive the accommodations letters, **please meet with me as soon as possible to discuss the provisions of these accommodations.**

**Grading:**

A total of 500 points are available in this class. The following will explain the breakdown of the final grade:

- |                             |                   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Service-learning project | <b>100 points</b> |
| Group task                  | <b>50 points</b>  |
| Project participation       | <b>30 points</b>  |
| School visits               | <b>20 points</b>  |
| 2. Social activity          | <b>15 points</b>  |
| 3. Movie paper              | <b>15 points</b>  |
| 4. Group reflection paper   | <b>50 points</b>  |
| Part 1—20 points            |                   |
| Part 2—30 points            |                   |
| 5. Group participation      | <b>30 points</b>  |
| 6. Quizzes                  | <b>50 points</b>  |
| 7. Conflict paper           | <b>20 points</b>  |
| 8. Theory paper             | <b>20 points</b>  |
| 9. Exam 1                   | <b>100 points</b> |
| 10. Exam 2                  | <b>100 points</b> |

**I round the final grades up at .5%. For example, if you have an 89.5%, I will round your final grade up to a 90%, depending on your overall class participation and attendance. However, if you have an 89.4%, you will receive an 89%.**

Communication Studies 2064-3  
Service-Learning  
**\*\*Tentative Class Schedule\*\***  
Fall 2008

Aug. 26	Introduction to course
Aug. 28	Ch. 1 Intro to group communication
Sept. 2	Service-learning training; <b>applications due</b>
Sept. 4	Ch. 9 Group problem solving
Sept. 9	Ch. 11 Goal setting
Sept. 11	Ch. 2 Group development
Sept. 16	Small group theory (not in textbook); <b>social activity due</b> ; assign theory paper
Sept. 18	Ch. 12 Planning meeting and group productivity
Sept. 23	Ch. 8 Group leadership; <b>theory paper due</b>
Sept. 25	Case study (read before class); assign group reflection paper
Sept. 30	<b>Review for Exam 1—bring notes and textbook</b>
Oct. 2	<b>Exam 1</b>
Oct. 7	Group climate—not in textbook; <b>group reflection paper due</b>
Oct. 9	<b>Fall break—Have fun, be safe!!!</b>
Oct. 14	Win as much as you can!!!
Oct. 16	Ch. 7 Conflict; assign conflict paper
Oct. 21	Posted articles (read before class)
Oct. 23	<b>Group work day</b>
Oct. 28	Ch. 6 Listening in groups; <b>conflict paper due</b>
Oct. 30	Ch. 5 Verbal and nonverbal communication in groups
Nov. 4	Group building day

- Nov. 6        **Group work day**
- Nov. 11      Ch. 3 Group member diversity
- Nov. 13      Movie
- Nov. 18      Movie
- Nov. 20      **TBA/Group Projects due**
- Nov. 25      **Group Reflection Paper, Part 2 due**
- Nov. 27      **Happy Thanksgiving!! Enjoy your turkey!!**
- Dec. 2        **Book Distribution Party (tentative)**
- Dec. 4        **Review for exam 2; movie questions due**

**Final Exam: Wednesday, Dec. 10 @ 12:30-2:30 in regular classroom**