

CMST 2064: Small Group Communication

Syllabus Spring 2015

Wade Walker

Office Hours: Mon./Wed. 9:30 – 11:30 am, or by appointment

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Textbook:

Engleberg, Isa N. and Dianna R. Wynn. *Working in Groups, 6th Ed.* Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon, 2013.

Other materials and articles via Moodle

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will study how to work well in groups by focusing on its communication components: creating workable goals, the stages of group development, task and social maintenance roles, membership diversity, leadership, motivation, listening, conflict resolution, problem solving, critical thinking and argumentation, planning and conducting meetings, and issues of ethical behavior.

COURSE GOALS

Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

- Identify and apply basic group communication concepts
- Demonstrate effective group interaction skills
- Identify and apply group communication strategies and skills that facilitate the achievement of group goals
- Identify and demonstrate essential group discussion strategies and skills
- Explain and apply the principles and practices of ethical communication
- Apply a variety of creative problem solving and critical thinking skills

ASSIGNED COURSEWORK

To increase your communication effectiveness in groups, you are asked to complete reading assignments, writing assignments, and oral presentations. The course grade distribution is on a 1000 point scale where you earn points for completed assignments. Final grades will NOT be rounded up.

Overview of Course Assignments and Point Values

Group Project I	100 points
Group Project II	200 points
Meeting Facilitation	100 points
Self-Performance Reflection	100 points
Peer Performance Review	50 points
Quizzes/Participation (Activities)	100 points
Class Discussion Participation	50 points
Midterm Exam	150 points
Final Exam	150 points

Grade Distribution = 1000 pt scale

- A = 900 – 1000 pts
- B = 800 – 899 pts
- C = 700 – 799 pts
- D = 600 – 699 pts
- F = 599 and below

General Grading Standards

- A = Work is polished and represents exceptional achievement well above expectations.
- B = Work contains noticeable flaws, but represents solid, praiseworthy achievement.
- C = Work contains a distracting number of flaws, but represents adequate achievement.
- D = Work is substantially marred by flaws and represents substandard achievement.
- F = Work is fatally marred by flaws or is missing.

Grades: All grades will be posted to Moodle and all assignments except for exams will be returned in class. If you do not understand why you received a specific grade, you will have one week to ask for clarification. Grades will not be discussed the day they are returned, nor will they be discussed over the telephone or through email. If you would like to go over the assignment or have questions concerning the grade, please come by during my scheduled office hours or schedule an appointment.

Extra Credit: No extra credit will be offered for the course. If you want a good grade, focus on the completing the regularly assigned credit like a boss. Go beast mode, or whatever it takes, to do a good job on things that are already assigned.

Attendance: Any absences from class will negatively affect your final grade, as you will miss information and in-class activities vital to the successful completion of your coursework. From PS-22: Class attendance is the responsibility of the student. The student is expected to attend all classes. A student who finds it necessary to miss class assumes responsibility for making up examinations, obtaining lecture notes, and otherwise compensating for what may have been missed. The course instructor will determine the validity of a student's reason(s) for absences and will assist those students who have valid reasons. Valid reasons for absences include:

1. Illness
2. Serious family emergency
3. Special curricular requirements such as judging trips or field trips
4. Court-imposed legal obligations such as subpoenas or jury duty
5. Military obligations
6. Serious weather conditions
7. Religious observances.
8. Participation in varsity athletic competitions or university musical events

The student is responsible for providing reasonable advance notification and appropriate documentation of the reason for the absence.

Make-up Exams: Make-up exams will ONLY be provided to students with university approved excuses (see above) that can be verified by written documentation. Written documentation must be given to the instructor the first day the student attends class following the absence. Otherwise, the absence will not be excused and the student will receive a zero (0) for the test grade.

Participation/Quizzes: You are expected to participate in all class activities. Activities are graded according to the quality of the work you produce, by the standards derived from the topics covered in the course. Your participation grade will be negatively affected if you frequently fail to attend class, if you fail to read assigned material, if you fail to bring printed material with you to class, if you are disruptively using technology (this includes texting, wearing headphones, and surfing the web).

Quizzes are frequently given at the beginning of class and cannot be made up. If you arrive late you will not be given extra time to complete the quiz. It is your responsibility to arrive in class on time, despite the devious machinations of traffic, weather, and alarm clocks.

I will drop the lowest quiz or activity grade, so NO makeup given for quizzes or class activities. In the business world, you will be expected to show up on time and regularly attend work. I have the same expectations for the classroom.

Assignments: Assignments to be turned in must be typed. This includes papers, outlines, or any other material assigned to be completed outside of class. Handwritten work will NOT be accepted. If you do not own a printer or computer, utilize the computer labs located on campus to complete your work. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late work **WILL NOT** be accepted.

If will not be able to attend class the day a written assignment or presentation is due, you will need to email me the assignment prior to the beginning of class as proof the assignment has been completed on time and provide a documented university approved excuse in order to turn in a paper copy and/or complete the presentation upon your return to class. See Attendance section (above) for university approved excuses.

Major Graded Assignment Overview: The following is a general overview of major assignments. More detailed prompts will be provided on Moodle outlining specific details of each assignment.

- *Exams* – Standard style of testing with questions based on lectures, assigned readings, and student presentations.
- *Quizzes/Participation* – Similar to exams, but quizzes will occur at random and unannounced. Typically, near the beginning of class. Participation within this category refers to participation in class activities. For example, if we decide to have a rap battle in class between the groups, and you attempt to prove your skills as a lyrical master, whether good or bad, you receive credit for participation. If you refuse to participate, you do not.
- *Class Discussion Participation* – Over the course of the semester, we will frequently have discussions over materials. Class discussion participation is based on your contributions to answering questions and engaging the class in an interesting conversation about the content being discussed. You will need to constructively participate 5 times over the course of the semester. Only 10 participation points can be earned each day.
- *Group Project I* – The first group project, due early in the semester, will focus on researching and proposing to work with a specific non-profit organization within the Baton Rouge community. The presentation will be 7 to 10 minutes long describing the organization your group believes the class should work with over the course of the rest of the semester. Your presentation should include important aspects of the non-profit organization (e.g. history, who they support, etc.) along with reasons for why we should contribute our time and talents to working with this group (see Project II). Along with the presentation, your group will turn in a 5 – 7 page proposal for the project.
- *Group Project II* – Based on the results from Project I (see above), task groups will be assigned to best fulfill the needs of raising money for the selected non-profit. Think of this project as a fundraiser. As a class, you will be organizing an event to raise donations to assist the selected non-profit. This will require coordination between you and your group as well as your group and the class as a whole. Details regarding the project will frequently be determined through class discussion. This project will be due near the end of the semester.

- *Self-Performance Reflection* – At the end of the semester you will write a 1 to 2 page self performance review of your contributions to the Group Project II. This will include the specifics of your performance within the group.
- *Peer-Performance Review* – You will anonymously review and rate yourself and the other members of your group based on their performance using their Self-Performance Reflection and your working knowledge of their contributions over the semester.
- *Meeting Facilitation* – In order to keep everyone on track throughout the semester, each person from the group will be required to present a 5 minute presentation on the status of their group goals. The presentation should address the previous meeting’s goals, present accomplishments, and forward movement of your group. Include information you may need from other groups (if any) along with information you may need to give them. Meeting facilitation days will conclude with discussion about the current state of the projects and in class group work.

Plagiarism: Please see the Student Code of Conduct (an excerpt of which appears below)

6. Plagiarism is defined as the lack of citation or the unacknowledged inclusion of someone else's words, structure, ideas, or data. When a Student submits work as his/her own that includes the words, structure, ideas, or data of others, the source of this information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate, and specific references, and, if verbatim statements are included, through quotation marks as well. Failure to identify any source (including interviews, surveys, etc.), published in any medium (including on the internet) or unpublished, from which words, structure, ideas, or data have been taken, constitutes plagiarism; Plagiarism also includes:
 - 6a. Falsifying or fabricating any information or citation in any academic exercise, work, speech, thesis, dissertation, test, or examination.
 - 6b. Submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructors; (from the [Student Code of Conduct](#) section 8.1.6)

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Cell Phones: Before coming to class, put your cell phones on silent or turn them off. Failing to do so will result in loss of quiz/participation points. This includes any time during lectures, group work, or any time you are in class. Folks, unless you are part of an organ transplant team that needs to be notified immediately that a heart has become available, you can be out of contact for the hour each morning that we meet. I will keep mine out in case of a LSU university emergency broadcast and to watch the time.

Laptops: Studies have shown that students using laptops in class to take notes retain less information from lectures and participate less in classroom discussions. While I am sure most of you are the exception to this rule, laptops will ONLY be permitted for students working as a note-taker for a classmate with a note from the ODS. Except for specific days (group work, presentations, etc.), laptops will not be necessary.

The “I Hate to Work in Teams” Kind Confrontation Policy: I think this goes without saying, but please be aware that the grades I assign to your group’s project paper and your presentation may

be the same for everyone in the group. Since each team member could be graded equally, regardless of her/his contributions to the project, I expect you to engage in “kind confrontation” with any member that the team perceives as not fulfilling commitments, missing team meetings, leaving early/arriving late, and not coming prepared. What is kind confrontation? It is the ability to deal with each other directly, assertively, tactfully and effectively to insure that everyone does her/his share of the work and fulfills commitments to the team. If it is determined by members of the team that another member is not fulfilling her/his commitments, then I expect you to kindly confront that member, either one-on-one or as a team, to discuss this, prior to bringing the issue to my attention. If this kind confrontation is not effective, then I expect you to let me know immediately if someone is not responding constructively to your group’s efforts to integrate, motivate and support her/him. Please be advised that once the issue is brought to my attention, then I will kindly confront that team member. I reserve the right to privately counsel and, if necessary, remove and discipline (with a failing grade for this assignment) any member who is unwilling or unable to meet her/his obligations to the group. If you choose not to engage in kind confrontation and choose to carry that member along, you have nobody to blame but yourself.

Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitations Act of 1973 states: “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 can be arranged. After you receive the accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

Final Exam Schedule Website: <https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/registraroffice/academics/final-exams/>

Course Schedule:

Dates/Academic Schedule	Reading Assignments	Assignments
Week 1: 1/12 – 1/16	Ch. 1 – Intro. To Group Comm	Intro to class
Week 2: 1/19 – 1/23 MLK Day – Classes Cancelled Monday	Ch. 2 – Group Development	
Week 3: 1/26 – 1/30	Ch. 3 – Group Membership	
Week 4: 2/2 – 2/6	Ch. 4 – Diversity in Groups	M/W – Group Project 1 Due
Week 5: 2/9 – 2/13	Ch. 5 – Group Leadership	M/W – Interviews
Week 6: 2/16 – 2/20 Mardi Gras Break – Classes Cancelled Monday/Wednesday		Fri – Groups assigned – In Class Work Day
Week 7: 2/23 – 2/27	Ch. 11 – Planning and Conducting Meetings	<i>Fri – Meeting Facilitation #1</i>
Week 8: 3/2 – 3/6		Mon - Midterm Review

		Wed - Midterm Exam
Week 9: 3/9 – 3/13	Ch. 6 – Verbal and Nonverbal Communication in Groups	
Week 10: 3/16 – 3/20	Ch. 7 – Listening in Groups	<i>Mon – Meeting Facilitation #2</i>
Week 11: 3/23 – 3/27	Ch. 8 – Conflict and Cohesion in Groups	
Week 12: 3/30 – 4/3 Spring Break begins – Classes Cancelled Friday	Ch. 9 – Structured and Creative Problem Solving in Groups	<i>Wed – Meeting Facilitation #3</i>
Week 13: 4/6 – 4/10 Spring Break (cont.) – Classes Cancelled All Week		
Week 14: 4/13 – 4/17	Ch. 10 - Critical Thinking and Argumentation in Groups	<i>Fri - Meeting Facilitation #4</i>
Week 15: 4/20 – 4/24	Ch. 12 – Technology and Virtual Groups	
Week 16: 4/27 – 5/1 Off-site Meeting – Scheduled Morning Classes Cancelled Wednesday and Friday		Group Project 2 Due (TBD) <i>Mon – Meeting Facilitation #5</i>
Week 17: 5/4 – 5/8 FINAL EXAM WEEK	2064-001 (7:30 – 8:30): 5/6 Wednesday 5:30 – 7:30 pm	2064-002 (8:30 – 9:30): 5/8 Friday 7:30 – 9:30 am

***NOTE: Below is a tentative course schedule and the instructor has the authority to update schedule if needed. A supplementary list of exact speech dates for each student will be provided after the final roster has been established.*