

Small Group Communication

CMST 2064

T TH 1:30-2:50 and T TH 3:00-4:20

237 & 127 Coates Hall

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Recommended Texts:

Engleberg, I.N., & Wynn, D.R. (2012). *Working in Groups (6th Ed.)*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Course Description/Goals: Humans are inherently social creatures. We live, work, and play in groups. Our physical and emotional well-being suffers when we are deprived of social interaction. Thus, it is important to understand how to most effectively and efficiently communicate in these groups. This course will help you understand the theoretical bases and practical applications of communicating in groups. This joining of theoretical and practical knowledge will make you a better group member, be it in your personal or professional lives. This class will explore theories of small group communication, group dynamics, group roles, the various functions and purposes of groups, how groups solve problems, how groups engage in conflict, leadership, nonverbal communication in group settings, and much more.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance & Participation: Your attendance at each class meeting is expected. Your class participation grade will be determined by in-class discussion participation, completion of in-class assignments/exercises, etc.

Plagiarism: I have no tolerance for plagiarism. Any student found to have turned in material not their own (either copied from a published source or copied from another student) will be immediately reported to the Dean of Students. The Internet has made plagiarism very easy and very tempting. Hundreds of sites offer papers, research, writing, and editing. The ease with which such material is available does not lessen the seriousness of claiming material from the Internet as your own. See the LSU policies on plagiarism here:

<http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html>. Your work would be considered plagiarized in part or entirely if you do any of the following:

- Submit a paper or speech that was written by someone other than you.

- Submit a paper or speech in which you use the ideas, metaphors, or reasoning style of another, but do not cite that source and/or place that source in your list of references. Simply rewording a sentence does not make work your own.
- Submit a paper or speech in which you cut-and-paste or use the exact words of a source and you do not put the words within quotation marks, use footnotes, or in-text citations, and place the source in your list of references.

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.

Grades: Final grades will be determined based on scores earned in the following assignments. All work must be done during the semester and not made up after the fact.

Course Assignments:

Participation.....	10%
Quizzes.....	15%
Test 1.....	15%
Test 2.....	20%
Group Project.....	40%

Make-Up Work: Class assignments are to be turned in by the time class starts on the day that they are due. Assignments will not receive credit if turned in after the end of class on the day that they are due. Late work will only be accepted with a valid and well-documented University approved excuse. If you have a University approved excuse and know that you will have to turn in something late, let me know *immediately*. Do not wait until you come back to class to inform me. Send me an email or give me a call to let me know about your situation.

Assignment Descriptions:

Participation: Participation in an important part of this course. Each class day, you will be given a participation score based on how involved and engaged you were with the class on that day. Obviously, those who fail to attend class will receive a zero for their participation score that day, because they were not present to participate. Similarly, if you take a nap or play on your phone or read a book or whatever throughout class, you will receive a zero for that day’s participation.

Quizzes: Short quizzes will be administered throughout the semester. The majority of the time, they will be unannounced. They will cover material we have discussed that day or in the previous class meetings.

Test 1: Um...it's a test. It tests what you've learned in the class up to that point. It will probably be administered around Midterms.

Test 2: Also a test of your knowledge in small group communication. We'll discuss when you'd like to have this test (during finals week or prior to it).

Group Project: Since this is a class about groups, it seems only right that the biggest assignment will be a group project. You will be assigned to groups of five at the beginning of the semester. You will select a media representation of a small group and analyze it. There will be five parts to this assignment: a group contract, an analysis of a group of your choosing, an analysis of your own group, peer evaluations, and meeting logs.

Group Contract. Early in the semester, your group will create a contract detailing the expected behavior of group members. What goes into these contracts is up to you. At the very least, you should consider creating rules for attendance, tardiness, and missed assignments (don't forget to include what the consequences for breaking those rules will be).

Primary analysis. This will be the primary focus of your project. You will select a fictional representation of a small group. This group may be on television, in a movie, in a book, etc. It should fit the criteria of small groups that we will discuss in class. Your analysis should focus on how this small group goes about communicating. You should expect to focus on each of the elements of group communication we discuss in class (roles, leadership, conflict, problem-solving, etc.). Keep in mind, good papers will not simply state their conclusions; they will support their conclusions with examples from the group's interactions.

Meta analysis. Introspection leads to true understanding and growth. Therefore, it isn't enough to simply analyze another group in action. To show that you truly understand small group communication, you'll need to analyze yourselves. Discuss aspects of the course as they relate to your group.

Peer evaluations. I understand that working in groups can be challenging. Unequal work distribution, unreliable group members, etc. can all make group projects unappealing. For this reason, you will have an opportunity to grade your group members. These evaluations will be completely anonymous. Peer evaluation scores will be factored in to each member's overall grade on the assignment.

Meeting logs. This is a large project that cannot be done as quickly as most. In order to effectively analyze your selected group, you will need to meet multiple times. I must stress again, one viewing of your selected medium will not be enough to complete this project. If you expect a good grade, you'll need to put in more time than that. Therefore, you will need to keep track of each of your meetings. A meeting log will be put on Moodle. One log should be filled out for each meeting you conduct. Logs will detail which members were at the meeting, how

long the meeting lasted, what was accomplished during the meeting, when you'll meet next, what work should be completed before the next meeting, etc.

Tentative Course Schedule

Topic	Dates
Introduction	01/20
Theoretical Approaches to Small Group Communication	01/22-01/27
Goals & Roles in Small Groups	01/29-02/03
No Class	02/05
Communicating in Small Groups	02/10-02/12
No Class—Mardi Gras	02/17
Listening & Feedback in Small Groups	02/19-02/26
Problem-Solving	03/03
Test 1	03/05
Nonverbal Communication	03/10-03/19
Leadership	03/24-03/26
Conflict Management and Resolution	03/31-04/02
No Class—Spring Break	04/07-04/09
Special Forms & Techniques for Small Group Communication	04/14-04/16
Planning & Conducting Meetings	04/21-04/28
Miscellaneous and Reviews	04/30
Exam	TBA