

S Y L L A B U S
CMST 2064: SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION
Department of Communication Studies, LSU
Fall, 2015

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Office Hours: MWF 10:30-11:20, 3:30-4:20; T/Th 10-noon, & by special appt.

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.

Texts

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

Course Reading Packet. Available at *Copies Too*, 5251 Nicholson (at Lee Dr.), 761-1888

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- identify and apply basic group *communication concepts* in a variety of contexts,
- demonstrate effective group *interaction skills* in a variety of contexts,
- identify and apply group communication strategies and skills that *facilitate the achievement of group goals* in a variety of contexts,
- identify and demonstrate essential group *discussion strategies and skills* in a variety of contexts, and
- explain and apply the principles and practices of *ethical communication* in a variety of group contexts.
- apply a variety of *creative problem solving* and *critical thinking skills* to a variety of group situations.

Course Assignments

Students will be graded on oral presentation, written compositions, examinations, and other specific assignments and exercises. This is the array of assignment emphases:

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Exercises | 20% = 200 pts. |
| Quizzes | 10% = 100 |
| Group Project and Presentation | 20% = 200 |
| Group Analysis Paper | 10% = 100 |
| Midterm Examination | 20% = 200 |
| Final Examination | <u>20% = 200</u> |
| Total | 100% = 1000 pts. |

In addition to the major assignments above, there will be a variety of smaller skill-building and practice “exercises” to help students maximize their effectiveness with group communication. *Because class exercises are not graded, per sé, but receive 100% when done conscientiously, there will be no unexcused make-ups for these exercises.* Excused make-ups will be allowed with no penalty.

Grading Scale and Rationale

The final grade will be determined on a 1000-**point** scale. ***IMPORTANT!:*** Ignore the percents on Moodle. Ignore them all semester. This course is based on **points** alone.

Coursework will be assessed within the increment grading scale, as follows:

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| A+ (Excellent) | [968-1000 pts. for the course] |
| A (Excellent) | [936-967 pts. for the course] |
| A- (Excellent) | [900-933 pts. for the course] |
| B+ (Noteworthy) | [867-899 pts. for the course] |
| B (Noteworthy) | [833-866 pts. for the course] |
| B- (Noteworthy) | [800-833 pts. for the course] |
| C+ (Acceptable) | [767-799 pts. for the course] |
| C (Acceptable) | [733-766 pts. for the course] |
| C- (Acceptable) | [700-732 pts. for the course] |
| D+ (Deficient) | [667-699 pts. for the course] |
| D (Deficient) | [633-666 pts. for the course] |
| D- (Deficient) | [600-632 pts. for the course] |
| F (Unacceptable) | [below 600 pts. in the course] |

- A *Excellence* indicates distinguished mastery of course material, exhibited by exceptionally well-prepared completion of assignments, demonstrating superior effort and understanding of principles.
- B *Noteworthiness* indicates good mastery of course material, exhibited by above average preparation of assignments, demonstrating original application of course materials.
- C *Acceptability* indicates acceptable mastery of course material, exhibited by satisfactory completion of assignments, demonstrating basic preparation and correct techniques.
- D *Deficiency* indicates a deficient grasp of course material, exhibited by incomplete preparation of assignments.
- F *Unacceptability* is a failure to complete the assignment during the scheduled time or to meet the academic standards of university-level work.

NOTE: “I” grades (Incomplete) cannot be given without the permission of the student’s academic dean.

Any work handed in late without a university-approved excuse will be penalized 10%.

Examinations

The two examinations will each be a combination of objective questions, fill-in-the-blank, and analysis. The objective section of the test will consist of true-false, multiple choice, fill-in, and/or matching items. Examinations will cover both text and classroom discussion material. **NOTE:** Students are expected to take the examinations at their scheduled times. Make-up exams will be allowed only under very limited circumstances. Students who miss an examination due to an authorized university activity should make arrangements with the instructor to do the work in advance. Make-up exams are given at the discretion and convenience of the course instructor.

Format Requirements for Written Work

All written work turned in for a grade in this course must observe the following format requirements:

- Word-processed in a clean, readable typeface no larger than 12-point;
- Double-spaced to provide room for your instructor to make comments;
- Your name, the course number and section, and the date should be at the top of the first page;
- Each page after the first should have your last name and the page number at the top;
- Pages should be held together with a staple (no paper clips or plastic covers, please);
- All work should be proofread for errors in grammar and spelling; and
- If information from research sources is used, a bibliography should be included.

Quizzes

There will be 12 quizzes over text chapter readings. The lowest 2 will be dropped. They will mostly consist of objective questions: true/false, multiple-choice, and matching. We will take the quiz as per the course schedule, usually where the chapter number is listed. Quizzes should help motivate the regular reading of course materials as well as help students anticipate similar examination questions. **The lowest two quiz scores in the course will be dropped. You will receive a zero for any quiz you miss, and can only be made up late with a properly documented university-approved excuse. You will need to miss 2 quizzes before you will be able to make up any quiz, even if excused.**

Attendance

For university purposes, attendance will be taken each class period. However, your education is your responsibility, so when you are late or miss class--for whatever reason--you need to get the missed information as best as possible. You will need to rely on the willingness of other students to share their notes with you. *If a student misses a day on which coursework is returned, it is the student's sole responsibility to specifically request such work be handed back.*

In order for students to make up missed work without penalty, they will need to provide verifiable documentation of the reason for absence. Decisions concerning make-up work will, finally, be made at the discretion of the instructor. Realize that there is an established correlation between attendance and performance in your coursework. Reasons for absence deemed acceptable by the university include: illness, serious family emergency, special curricular requirements such as judging trips or field trips, court-imposed legal obligations such as subpoenas or jury duty, military obligations, serious weather conditions, religious holidays, and participation in varsity athletic competitions or university musical events.

Classroom Policies

Because this is a communication course, everyone should respect the rights of other speakers and the rights of the listeners. Such respect requires that you:

- Turn off all cell phones, pagers and other electronic devices at the start of each class;
- Pay attention to all speakers rather than doing homework, social networking, etc.;
- Come to class prepared to listen and to participate in all exercises and discussions;
- Bring an *open mind* to class discussions and a willingness to entertain new ideas;
- In general, treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself!

ADA Statement

The Americans With Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation 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 Services (115 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letter, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.

Ethical Standards

I am convinced that only a minority of students cheat. However, the university very jealously protects the academic integrity of the institution. Technically, you do not “earn” a degree, you are awarded a degree. This means that a diploma represents the standards, traditions, values, integrity and honor of the university. Additionally, the diploma represents your acceptance into a fellowship, a guild of academics reaching back a millennium. The university grants this honor, and can take it away at any point—even posthumously—when it discovers you are not worthy of the honor.

Cheating will not be tolerated in this course. Cheating includes, but is not limited to copying or representing the work of others as your own (i.e., plagiarism), stealing quizzes or exams, and copying the questions or answers of quizzes or exams. Any cheating will be dealt with according to the discretion of the instructor. The minimum punishment will be a failure grade for an assignment. More dire punishment may include a failure grade for the course and expulsion from the university. Please see the university’s Code of Student Conduct for information regarding this policy.

Finally, and importantly, I hope you find that honest intellectual achievement is a life-long reward that results in the kind of personal growth for which you may be always proud.

Motivation

This course just may be one of the most important gifts you ever give yourself! For many it is a required course, and for good reason--it has the potential for transforming your life. Just as importantly, the proper use of developed communication skills can transform the world. It is a fearsome and wonderful power. It deserves your utmost respect and concerted effort. As with all good things of promise, it remains what you make of it.