

COMM318: Small Group Communication

Dr. Angie Jahr

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TEXT: Engleberg, I.N., & Wynn, D.R. (2010). *Working in groups: Communication principles and strategies* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Houghton.

Course Fee: \$5.00

A word about the course fee: The five dollar fee is money that will be used for a class activity and is a non-refundable contribution to that exercise. The fee will be collected the first week of class. If the contribution of this fee presents a financial hardship to you, or if you have other concerns related to this expectation, please speak to me privately and within the first week of class.

OBJECTIVE:

Communication, on most occasions, involves at least two, often more individuals. It is important that whether you are in a circle of friends, the workplace, or in the classroom, understanding how small groups work is essential to effective communication. The objectives in this course are established to assist students in the exploration, identification, and the effective practice of small group communication theories. As related to the content area, this class will focus on and assess you primarily in the following areas:

- A: To develop an understanding of how one's communication habits can help or hinder achievement of career and personal goals by recognizing diverse communication styles and expectations.
- B: To improve skills in listening, organizing, writing, group participation, and oral presentation.
- C: To develop an awareness of the consequences of our communication and an appreciation of the responsibilities of ethical communicators.
- D: To learn, practice, and analyze theories of group dynamics, problem-solving, and decision-making in small groups.
- E. To evaluate one's own competencies and weaknesses as a critical thinker and contributor to the interactive group process.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The following are Communication Program Learning Outcomes intended to be addressed in various courses and at varied levels of demonstration. While multiple outcomes are introduced, developed, and mastered in each course, highlighted are those outcomes specifically addressed and measured in this course:

1. **Presentations: Increased confidence and competence in public presentations.**
2. **Relationships: Knowledge of the manner in which communication creates, maintains and transforms relationships and the ability to engage in effective and productive relational communication.**
3. **Contexts: Knowledge of the crucial role communication plays in community, professional and civic contexts, and the ability to use communication behaviors ethically and effectively in various contexts.**
4. Diversity: Knowledge and respect for the role of culture and diversity in communication, and the ability to effectively communicate within and across cultures.
5. **Influence: Competency in the construction and analysis of arguments and discourse intended to influence beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices.**
6. Technology: Ability to effectively use communication technology and to critically evaluate how technology affects communication.
7. Research: Competence in systematic inquiry, including the process of asking questions, systematically attempting to answer them, and understanding the limitations of the conclusions reached.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Student Commitment

The following assignments will allow for the assessment of your achievements of the outcomes identified above.

Course Assignments and Descriptions:

The following are the specific assignments that will be used to evaluate your understanding and utilization of the content area(s) being explored. Each assessment is described below. In addition the point allocation for each assessment area is defined below.

1. Chapter Discussion/Facilitation (20%)

For each chapter, you will demonstrate your understanding by applying and submitting the following information:

- A. Identify a positive illustration of the concept(s) discussed in the chapter
- B. Identify a negative/ineffective use of the concept(s) discussed in the chapter
- C. The most significant takeaway from this chapter was.....

2. Small Group Interview (3@10% each = 30%)

The current environment has certainly brought challenges to the planning and execution of daily operations for most teams, both professionally and personally. Throughout the course of the semester you will analyze and present your findings of the changing team environment.

The first interview is in fact, a reflection. Think about your own team experiences. Discuss the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of those experiences. In your opinion, what worked and didn't. Why? What recommended change would you suggest to make the experiences more successful.

In addition to the reflection discussed above, you will also interview two individuals in two different team environments. The interview will focus on the use of small group communication concepts. Similar to the reflection you will present the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of his/her experiences and conclude with recommended change would you suggest to make the experiences more successful.

3. Consensus Seeking Project (20%)

Each student will receive a grade for participating in this project. Student grades will be determined based on the evaluation of the professor and observers. Additional information regarding the project will be provided in class. In a 3-5 page evaluation you are asked to provide your assessment of each member of the group and his/her use of the tools that we have discussed and your analysis of the group's encounter with this activity. You are not evaluating the activity, but rather the group encounter with the activity. (5-5-5-5)

4. Final Exam (10%)

During the scheduled final exam time you will take a final exam that is, in part, a reflection of the classes group effort. We will discuss this process in more detail during class.

5. Participation/Class Activities/Attendance (20%)

"Participation" is worth a significant amount of your final grade in this class, because this is a discussion-based course. I will rarely lecture. This class is based on the philosophy that your most valuable education comes not from being 'talked at' or 'given' information. Rather, you will learn most from learning how to ask (good) questions, discuss matters relating to issues that matter (like how we communicate), and to solve and explore problems alone, in groups, and through discussion and experience.

Participation does not mean talking a lot. Rather, participation means making worthy and thoughtful contributions based on an understanding of your responsibilities in discussion and the choices you make because of them. Hence, the grade you earn for participation will be based on the quality and consistency of your choices for in class contributions, and your ability to appropriately participate in both leadership and followership roles.

You need to be fully prepared to make every meeting a worthwhile learning experience by coming to class prepared and ready to discuss readings, your application paragraphs, your experiences, and your thoughts as they relate to these. You should demonstrate that you know what it means to make a positive contribution to a discussion; part of being a good participant in discussion means being ready and willing to respond to OTHERS in class, not just the professor. These things are not optional; they are required by each member of this class. Much of your learning will take place in class and cannot be "made up." Even in the event of an excused absence, you are not excused from the participation opportunities you miss. (10-10)

COURSE SCHEDULE:

REFER TO FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE FOR FINAL EXAM TIME

The instructor reserves the right to modify, amend, or change the syllabus as the curriculum and/or program require(s)

RELATED DISCLOSURES

Recording and Privacy

In this class, software will be used to record live class sessions. As a student in this class, your participation may be recorded. These recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the class. The intent of the recordings is to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content presented during the current semester in which the recording is made. You may not download, share, replicate, or publish the recording, in whole or in part, or use the recording for any other purpose without the written approval of the instructor. Recordings are for personal academic use only, where personal academic use is restricted to the personal study use of the individual. Any violations to this policy must be reported to the Vice President of Academic Affairs and may result in disciplinary action, including expulsion from the college. All recordings will become unavailable to students in the class shortly after the course ends.

If you have any concerns about being recorded during class, please discuss your options with your instructor or express your concerns to the Dean of Faculty.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require that “no qualified person shall, solely by reason of disability, be denied access to, be excluded from participation in, or the benefits of services, programs or activities or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal assistance.”

If you have a disability, or feel you are in need of accommodations, please contact Kristi Ringen in the Academic Resource Center (kringen@blc.edu, 507-344-7730).

EXPECTATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Respect: In order for each of us to receive a valuable education in this class, we will all need to listen openly and discuss ideas respectfully. College policies on harassment and discrimination outline behaviors that will not be tolerated. Please talk with me if you feel threatened or disrespected in group exercises or class discussion. While class is in session, any and all usage of these electronic devices must be for the express purpose of facilitating learning for this course only, like taking notes or looking up references mentioned in class. Any other usage of these devices, such as texting, using social media, playing video games, or working on other classes, may result in the student being asked to surrender the device or leave the class.

Attentiveness/Attendance: Class participation is often in the form of graded activities that cannot be made up at another time. In addition to your oral feedback in class, I will be evaluating your nonverbal feedback. Sleeping, reading, or writing your grocery list is unacceptable during class. Since it violates expectations of respect, distracting and inattentive students will be dismissed. If you are not in class, that is your responsibility and you will knowingly accept the consequences.. Any absence requires that you discuss with me *prior* to dates missed. Please familiarize yourself with what is an "excused absence".

Responsibility: Late work will not receive full credit. In nearly all cases it will result in zero points. Questions concerning "but" are not particularly useful to the individual trying to develop a professional persona. Time management is a necessary skill for all professionals. Assignments are due during class unless otherwise noted.

Honesty: Plagiarism or cheating in any form is inexcusable. Plagiarism or cheating in any form will destroy your credibility as a communicator -- academically and professionally. Plagiarism is defined by the university as misrepresenting as one's own anything done by another. Take credit for your work. Cite others for theirs; failure to do so will result in a F in the course. If you don't know what academic dishonesty is, ASK! Honesty about absences or late work will not be questioned. Your best *intentions* are assumed. Don't spend your time trying to convince me that you are a good person. I believe you. I will evaluate the *outcome* of course assignments, however.

Equal Opportunity: If you need course adaptations or accommodations for any reason, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

Open Mind: Please talk with me about any concerns, confusion, or difficulties. An open mind is essential. The nature of this course is demanding. Most of us rarely evaluate our communication habits. Often when we are frustrated by the conflict that inevitably emerges in groups, we blame it on the incompetence of others. This will be a comfortable tendency for you, too. In this class, we will examine group dynamics through several critical perspectives. You will be expected to focus on the group dynamics, not on individuals. We cannot choose all future co-workers and employers. We can, however, come to the given group with strategies that enable us to positively contribute and cooperate. Building and maintaining a collaborative classroom is everyone's responsibility. Come to class prepared to rethink the assigned material and share your reactions. I welcome critical thinking during class.

Grades defined:

A -- Achievement *outstanding* relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.

B -- Achievement *significantly above* the level necessary to meet course requirements.

C -- Achievement *meeting the basic course requirements* in every respect.

D -- Achievement *worthy of credit* even though it does not fully meet the basic course requirements in every respect.

F -- Performance *failing to meet* the basic course requirements.

I -- Incomplete; arranged in *extreme* cases only.

Performance not performer: It is common and maybe natural, given our competitive culture, for students to feel that the instructor's grade is an evaluation of them as persons. "She gave me a C, she hates me." I am not hired to make such evaluations. I do not judge your personality, your intellectual *potential*, or your intentions with a grade. I judge your performance in our class. Your completed work and class participation is evaluated.

Grade disputes: Understanding the above comments, you are invited to discuss any grade received *after* you have (1) reread the assignment, (2) reread/view your work, (3) reread my evaluation, and (4) type a justification for the grade you think you earned. I will accept your written justification 24 hours after you received my grade. We will then arrange a time to discuss both evaluations.

General guidelines on papers: Type, double space, staple, and either APA or MLA styles are acceptable. Font size 12. Be consistent. Grammar is graded.

Exam/Quizzes: With exception of the final exam, exams/quizzes are not an inherent part of the assessment process for this course. However, if my perception is that the group is not coming to our meetings prepared, exams/quizzes including a combination of multiple-choice, identification, true-false, and essay, will be given.

Class Activities: There will be random assignments requiring you to respond to the reading, engage in group exercises, or provide brief written reactions to questions provided in class. Any remaining points will consist of overall quality and quantity of class participation.

	SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION
Week 1	
A24	Orientation
	Getting over our stereotypes
	What's this class about? Who am I? Who Are You? Getting over our stereotypes
Week 2	
A31	Chapter 1: An Intro to SGC
	Chapter 12: Planning and Conducting Meeting Chapter 14: Technology in Groups
	Chapter 13: Group Presentations
Week 3	
S7	NO CLASS - LABOR DAY
	Interview Presentations
	Interview Presentations
Week 4	
S14	Chapter 2: Group Development
	Chapter 3: Group Membership
	More on Chapters 2 & 3
Week 5	
S21	Chapter 4: Group Diversity
	More on Chapter 4
	Chapter 5: Group Leadership
Week 6	
S28	Chapter 6: Group Motivation
	<i>More on Chapter 5 & 6</i>
	Survival Exercise
Week 7	
O5	Interview Presentations
	Interview Presentations
	NO CLASS - MIDTERM BREAK
Week 8	
O12	Work day - No Zoom Meeting
	Chapter 7: Verbal & Nonverbal Communication

	More on Chapter 7
<i>Week 9</i>	
<i>019</i>	Chapter 8: Listening in Groups
	NO CLASS- ADVISING DAY
	Chapter 9: Conflict & Cohesion in Groups
<i>Week 10</i>	
<i>026</i>	More on Chapter 9
	Chapter 10: Structured & Creative Problem Solving
	More on Chapter 10
<i>Week 11</i>	
<i>N2</i>	Chapter 11: Critical Thinking & Argumentation
	INTRO TO THE CSP
	CSP
<i>Week 12</i>	
<i>N9</i>	CSP
	CSP
	CSP
<i>Week 13</i>	
<i>N16</i>	CSP FINAL
	Interview Presentations
	Interview Presentations
<i>Week 14</i>	
<i>N23</i>	What does it mean to be informed?
	(Assessment & Evaluation of CSP Due) Work Day - No Zoom Meeting
	NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING BREAK
<i>Week 15</i>	
<i>N30</i>	What does it mean to be informed?
	CSP Discussion
	Preparation of Final Exam – A Group Effort
<i>Week 16</i>	
<i>D7</i>	Preparation of Final Exam – A Group Effort
	Preparation of Final Exam – A Group Effort
<i>Week 17</i>	FINAL EXAM DURING SCHEDULED TIME- REFER TO FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE