

# Communication Studies 2064

## Small Group Communication

### Spring 2015

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Teaching Schedule:  
CMST 3210-01, TTH 7:30-8:50 AM  
CMST 2064-05, TTH 9:00-10:20 AM  
CMST 2064-06, TTH 12:00-1:20 PM  
CMST 2064-07, TTH 1:30-2:50 PM  
CMST 4200-03 As needed

Office hours: TTH 10:45 AM-11:45;  
Wednesdays 10:00 AM-1:00 PM  
\*\*\*Please let me know if you plan to stop by\*\*\*

#### **Required Textbook**

Engleberg, I. N. and Wynn, D. R. (2012). *Working in groups* (6<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. In this class we discuss the following ideas:

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

#### **Student Requirements:**

**Laptop policy:** To help students avoid the temptation of checking Facebook, email, surfing the web, and all the many other distractions the web provides, students will not be allowed to take notes on laptops (with the exception of those students working as a note taker for a classmate with a letter from ODS). Except for specific days, laptops in class will not be necessary.

*Additionally:*

- *Refrain from* talking on the cell phone, checking email, text message, or other similar behaviors; if you do so, you will be asked to leave class for the day.

- *Refrain from* sleeping in class; if you do so, you will be asked to leave class for the day.
- *Refrain from* doing crossword, reading the newspaper, or other similar activities; if you do so, you will be asked to leave class for the day.
- *Do observe* general norms of common courtesy, including (but not limited to) listening to fellow students, respectfully discussing issues of disagreement, and refraining from talking when others are talking. Failure to conduct yourself in a respectful manner will result in your being asked to leave class for the day.

*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.

*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:**

*Game activity:* This group activity is designed to encourage students to learn how to apply the theoretical ideas learned in class to practical situations. In this assignment each group will design a game to help explain one of the ideas discussed in the book. Each group will present the game to the class. During this time, the group should provide an explanation of the purpose of the game, directions for playing the game, and a "example" round to demonstrate how to play the game. The assignment will be graded

on three things: 1. instructor evaluation, 2. peer evaluation, 3. class evaluation of the game. A more detailed grading sheet will be posted on Moodle closer to the due of the assignment. The game presentation will serve as one of many informal speeches in class to fulfill the spoken requirement of a Communication-Intensive Course.

*Group papers:* Two group papers will be assigned during the semester, one midway through and one at the end of the semester, asking you to apply what we have discussed up to that point in the semester. These papers must be done in class and **cannot** be made up if missed without an excused absence. In the case of an excused absence, a valid university excuse **must be presented on the student's first day** back in class in order to make up the paper.

*Group presentation:* Each group is required to do a midterm presentation addressing group issues exemplified in a movie or TV show. More information will be posted on Moodle.

*Quizzes:* Five 10-point quizzes and five 5-point participation 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. Valid university excuses must be submitted the day the student returns to class in order to make up a missed quiz.**

*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.

*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 **must**

present valid documentation (doctor's note, etc.) the first day you return to 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.

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 be accepted.**

**Extra Credit:**

*"Get to know you" visit*—I like to get to know my students and wish students just dropped in to visit and chat. Unfortunately, students don't do this very often and this makes me sad. Getting to know you enables me to know better how to help you. For this reason, I am offering five bonus points once during the semester for a little "get to know you" visit. You have a limited time to make your visit and it is worth 5 bonus points. This will be your only opportunity for "bonus" points during the semester. The "cut off" date is posted on the class schedule.

**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. Social activity	<b>15 points</b>
2. Group presentation	<b>50 points</b>
3. Group paper #1	<b>20 points</b>
4. Group paper #2	<b>20 points</b>
5. Group participation	<b>25 points</b>
6. Group Quizzes	<b>50 points</b>
7. Participation quizzes	<b>25 points</b>
8. Attendance	<b>20 points</b>
9. Game activity	<b>100 points</b>
10. Exam 1	<b>75 points</b>
11. Exam 2	<b>100 points</b>

**I round the final grades up at .6%. For example, if you have an 89.6%, I will round your final grade up to a 90%, depending on your overall class participation and attendance. However, if you have an 89.5%, you will receive an 89%.**

**Furthermore, I do not post grades on Moodle. You are adults and should be responsible enough to keep track of your own grades.**