

## Small Group Communication

CMST 2064

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### Required Texts:

Engleberg, I.N. and Wynn, D.R. (2013). *Working in Groups, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Pearson.

Various readings and videos to be posted on Moodle

### Course Goals:

In this course, we will explore how we, as human beings, create socially significant messages which help us shape our identity, persuade others to take action, and shed light on the value systems of our culture. We will learn how individuals create and use messages to generate common meaning with others, to facilitate cooperative action, to perform social and cultural roles, and to reinforce or alter prevailing attitudes in our society.

This course will provide us with a variety of lenses through which to view and examine the communication process. At the end of the semester, we should have a richer understanding of the similarities and differences between the areas of communication and have acquired practical knowledge of the communication process itself.

### Assignments:

The course is divided in to five units, each of which revolves around a particular section of your textbook:

- 1) Defining Small Group Communication
- 2) Group Development
- 3) Group Cooperation
- 4) Group Cohesion
- 5) Groups in the Future

### Absences/Late Work:

If you're going to miss a major assignment, let me know ahead of time. To make up a missed assignment for full credit, you will need to provide documentation of the emergency that kept you away from class. This can be a doctor's note, an obituary, a letter from a coach, etc. If you miss an assignment for a non-emergency reason (like sleeping through it), come talk to me and we'll discuss making it up for a maximum grade of a C. Life happens, after all, but not without some consequences. In order to make up an assignment after an unexcused absence, you must be in overall good standing in the course. You must also present an outline proving that you were, in fact, ready to make your presentation that day, and you must schedule your make-up assignment within one week of missing class.

I will not accept late written work after the day it is due. If you miss turning an assignment in during the class period you're supposed to have it ready, you can turn in in (paper copies only) by 5pm that day for increasingly reduced credit. After 5pm, work will no longer be accepted without proof of extenuating circumstances (see above).

### **Academic Misconduct:**

Hey! Hey! I made up a word: "Plagiarism."

Don't plagiarize. Any student found to have turned in material not their own (either downloaded from the Internet or written by another student) will immediately be reported to the Dean of Students. You can find the official LSU policies on plagiarism here: <http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html>. Your work would be considered plagiarism in part or entirely if it involves any of the following:

- Submitting work that was written by someone other than you (an online source, a friend, etc.).
- Submitting work 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.
- Submitting work 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.
- Submitting work that you have written together with a friend as if it was solely your own intellectual property.
- Submitting work for that you wrote verbatim for different course.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation 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.

### **Grading:**

The class is based on accumulation of up to 1,000 points rather than on any kind of weird system of weighted percentages. Think of each assignment like getting achievements in a video game. Over time, you'll earn the appropriate number of achievements to get to your goal grade. (Or not. And in this game you don't get to repeat levels until you beat the boss. It's a one-shot deal.) Here, so you're aware, are the point amounts for each of your graded assignments.

Quizzes (6) – 120 points

Video Responses (4) – 80 points

Analysis Essays (2) – 400 points

Midterm Debate – 200 points

Final Presentation – 200 points

<b>Date</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Homework</b>
<b>Th 1/14</b>	Course Intro/Activity	Read E&W Ch. 1
<b>Tue 1/19</b>	Defining Group Communication <b>(Quiz)</b>	Watch/Respond to "A Common Person's Guide to Bronies" [Moodle]
<b>Th 1/21</b>	Balance	Read De Dreu, "Workplace Conflict" [Moodle]
<b>Tue 1/26</b>	Advantages of Groups/Ethics <b>(Quiz)</b>	Read E&W Ch. 2
<b>Th 1/28</b>	Group Dynamics and Development	Read E&W Ch. 3
<b>Tue 2/2</b>	Group Evolution and Membership <b>(Quiz)</b>	Read E&W Ch. 4
<b>Th 2/4</b>	Diversity in Groups	Read E&W Ch. 5
<b>Tue 2/9</b>	NO CLASS - MARDI GRAS BREAK	
<b>Th 2/11</b>	Group Leadership <b>(Quiz)</b>	Read Goodger, "Ritual Solidarity and Sport" [Moodle]
<b>Tue 2/16</b>	Solidarity	Read Elias & Dunning, "Dynamics of Football" [Moodle]
<b>Th 2/18</b>	Group Communication in Sport and Games	Social Event Planning
<b>Tue 2/23</b>	Planning Day	Social Event Planning
<b>Th 2/25</b>	Event Day	Write Event Analysis; Read E&W Ch. 6&7
<b>Tue 3/1</b>	Nonverbal Communication & Listening	Read E&W Ch. 10
<b>Th 3/3</b>	Critical Thinking and Argument in Groups	Read Parliamentary Debate Assignment & Resolution [Moodle]
<b>Tue 3/8</b>	Parliamentary Debate Rules/Caucus	Debate Research
<b>Th 3/10</b>	Caucus	Debate Research
<b>Tue 3/15</b>	Parliamentary Debate	Debate Research
<b>Th 3/17</b>	Parliamentary Debate/Negotiation	Read Smith & Eisenberg, "Conflict at Disneyland" [Moodle]
<b>Tue 3/22</b>	NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK	
<b>Th 3/24</b>	NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK	
<b>Tue 3/29</b>	Identification and Cohesion	Read E&W Ch. 9
<b>Th 3/31</b>	Problem-Solving <b>(Quiz)</b>	Watch/Respond to Roseanne Episode [Moodle]
<b>Tue 4/5</b>	Group Communication in Families	Watch/Respond to "Night of the Living Dead" [Moodle]

<b>Th 4/7</b>	Group Communication in Crisis <b>(Quiz)</b>	Prepare for Crisis
<b>Tue 4/12</b>	In-Class Crisis	Prepare for Crisis
<b>Th 4/14</b>	In-Class Crisis	Write Crisis Response; Read E&W Ch. 12
<b>Tue 4/19</b>	Technology and Virtual Groups	
<b>Th 4/21</b>	Final Presentation Work Day	
<b>Tue 4/26</b>	Final Presentations	
<b>Th 4/28</b>	Final Presentations	
<b>FINALS WEEK</b>	Final Presentations	

**Video Response Form**

*To be completed for each of the videos you are assigned as homework throughout the course*

In one brief paragraph, summarize the plot of what you saw:

In another brief paragraph, draw a conclusion about small group communication based on what you've observed. Give an example from the video that supports your claim.

## **Essay: Social Event Planning Response**

*Length:* 2-3 pages, double-spaced, excluding References

*Font:* Times New Roman

*Header:* Your name, the course name and number, and the assignment name, single-spaced

*Citation Style:* APA

*Minimum Number of Distinct Citations:* 3

This essay asks you to reflect on your experience planning our class's Social Event.

You should spend approximately one page discussing the planning process and approximately one page discussing the actual execution of the event.

Please also include an introduction and a conclusion, and otherwise make sure your grammar and spelling are commensurate with a formal essay.

Include examples of the following phenomena in your analysis: Group Dynamics, Group Development, Group Evolution, Group Membership, Diversity in Groups, Group Leadership, and Solidarity. Include examples from the events that illustrate these theories as you discuss them.

Be sure to include APA-format in-text citations of at least three different credible sources as you write (they can be drawn from our in-class readings from this unit which you may complement with your own research), as well as a References page at the end of the essay.

## Parliamentary Debate Assignment

The parliamentary debate assignment mimics the styles of argumentation found in governing bodies, including the U.S. Congress, British Parliament, as well as many workplaces and political organizations.

While different in style from the value and proposal debates, the parliamentary style will require you to draw on all the skills you have developed up to this point in the semester. You must also do so with far less individual speaking time and in cooperation with your “party.”

The parliamentary debate will center around a bill. The class will be broken into two parties, one in favor of the bill (Government Party) and the other against (Opposition Party).

During the “Parliamentary Caucuses,” both groups will collaborate and develop their strategy for supporting their position. This should involve doing research, assigning roles, anticipating opposition arguments, and anything else that will help your side prevail.

- **Prime Minister Speech:** The Government Party is responsible for electing/appointing their party leader. This opening speech should articulate the general argument in favor of the bill. *It should last no longer than four minutes.*
- **Opposition Leader Speech:** The Opposition Party must also elect/appoint a leader. This speech should articulate the general argument against the bill. *It should last no longer than four minutes.*
- **Severel statements** will follow these opening speeches, starting with the Government Party and alternating between teams from that point forward. *These speeches should last no longer than two minutes.*
- **Preparation Time:** There will be an intermission of *five minutes* in length so that the teams may work together on their leaders’ final responses.
- **Opposition Rebuttal:** Once all party members have had their say, the leader of the Opposition Party will return to the platform to deliver a final refutation of the bill. *This speech should last no longer than three minutes.*
- **Prime Minister Rebuttal:** The leader of the Government Party gets the last word and *can speak for no longer than three minutes.*

Here are some other important parts of the process:

- Each side gets a grand total of *ten minutes of preparation time* to use however they see fit.
- A member of one party may ask a speaking member of the opposing party a question during their speech. The speaker, however, has the option of refusing to recognize the questioner. Answering questions does count against speech time.

## **Essay: Crisis Communication Response**

*Length:* 2-3 pages, double-spaced, excluding References

*Font:* Times New Roman

*Header:* Your name, the course name and number, and the assignment name, single-spaced

*Citation Style:* APA

*Minimum Number of Distinct Citations:* 3

Our Murder Mystery Party was meant to be fun, and I hope you enjoyed employing your persona toward finding meaning in a chaotic situation. But underneath the fun you should be able to find undercurrents of small group communication practices at work.

This essay, like the last one, is an opportunity to reflect on your experience. Follow a similar format with an introduction/conclusion/and responsible grammar and spelling practices.

Once again, you need to cite three distinct sources from this unit and your own research throughout your analysis and include a References page.

Here are issues to look for as you reflect on your experiences:

- What fostered identification in the group and motivated cohesion?
- What crises was the group facing?
- How did you solve problems together using communication?
- How did your small group communication help solve the puzzle?
- What conclusions can you draw about communication in small groups based on this experience?



## **Final Presentation: Communication in Online Groups**

*Length:* 30-40 minutes followed by a 5-10 minute Q&A

*Materials to be Submitted:* Presentation notes, an APA bibliography for the entire presentation, and a one-page evaluation form from each group member

*Minimum Number of Distinct Citations:* 5

For this presentation, we're tying it all together – all the theory from throughout the course. This needs to be a formal presentation with an introduction and conclusion and solid execution of public speaking skills. You will be working with a group of roughly five of your classmates in order to get all the parts of the assignment accomplished.

Your assignment begins with each group member joining a different online community of some kind. Most of you may already be members of some, in which case your case study can build on your already-established experience. If you are not, here are examples of communities you can join. (*If you wish to join a community that's not on this list, run it by the instructor before you start working and writing.*) Keep in mind that to adhere to the parameters of this course, the online group must contain more than two people and must be somehow (ostensibly) goal-oriented.

*Facebook groups (active ones)*

*Group text messages*

*GroupMe*

*Runescape or other free online MMORPGs that have a chat function*

*World of Warcraft or similar pay-to-play games (if you already have an account)*

*Subreddits (accessible, active ones)*

*Yik-Yak*

*Message Boards/Forums (Tiger Droppings, for example)*

*Any blog-hosting site (like Tumblr)*

*A Skype call or Google Hangout with more than three people*

Once you have established yourself in these communities, each of you must go out of your way to interact with other people in order to complete this assignment. You may attempt to cooperate with others to solve problems, you may start conflicts, or you may help resolve conflicts started by others. If you troll people for this assignment (which is within the realm of possibilities) please attack ideas rather than people and avoid hate speech – trust me, people are easy enough to rile up without all that nonsense.

After you have each engaged in your online communication, you will meet back with your group to discuss your experience. There will be a work day in class that is ideal for accomplishing this step.

With this stimulus, you will use your experiences to create a presentation for the class. Each member will briefly address what sort of experience they had, and then the group will address the following concerns based on their collective observations:

- 1) Does the definition of “Small Group Communication” change in a virtual environment?
- 2) How do groups form and change digitally? Who leads them, and how do those people become leaders?
- 3) How do people listen and think critically online? How does their behavior affect the communication process in ways that are different from face-to-face interaction?
- 4) How do virtual groups stay cohesive in the face of a crisis (or do they)? How are problems addressed?
- 5) Does your experience mesh with the textbook’s notion of virtual groups? Why or why not?

Each answer to a question must include perspective from multiple members’ experiences. (You will not be divvying up one question per member – you must discuss all of them together to reach a generalizable conclusion.) You may cite sources from throughout the course for this, as well as your own independent research as you see fit. Sources must be cited out loud during the presentation to count. Discussion of each question must be couched in examples from group member experiences, including Screenshots that include usernames or photos that directly correlate with that member (i.e. we don’t know who “butterfly215” is, but we can identify “liz.sills” or “cmst2064”). Each members’ online experience must be represented and each member must deliver at least part of the presentation.

To facilitate all this, a PowerPoint or Prezi must accompany at least part of your discussion. Remember good presentation skills, including making sure your visual accents are mostly pictures rather than words. Writing out your entire presentation on the screen is both a problem for your speaking abilities and a

distraction for your audience.

On presentation day, each group will submit a folder that contains everyone’s presentation notes (which may be a script or a keyword outline), an APA-style bibliography outlining all of your sources, and a page-long evaluation from each member. This evaluation will include 1) a paragraph detailing what you personally contributed to the group effort during this project, and 2) a paragraph detailing the contributions of your group members. Any group members who receive consistent negative evaluations will lose points from the overall group grade.



