

CMST 2064 - 10
SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION
SPRING 2016

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OFFICE HOURS:
M,W,F: 8:50 - 9:20
11:35 - 12:25

TEXT (*required*): Engleberg, I. N. and Wynn, D. R. (2013). *Working in Groups*, 6th Ed. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon

THE COURSE:

This course examines the often unique communicative dynamics which emerge within bounded social units, i.e., groups. Some have held groups up to be the answer to all intricate problems, arguing that something magical happens, that group output is greater than the sum of its parts. Others are less optimistic, seeing groups as an approach which should be used sparingly lest we stumble upon some of the many traps which can plague group work. While we won't answer this dilemma in this class, we will provide you with a background and vocabulary with which you might think about group work more intelligently.

In order to think more sophisticatedly about groups, we will examine several theoretical issues relevant to group work. Among these are goal development, 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. In the end we will hopefully attain an enhanced ability to make wise choices about when and where to use small groups as we progress through our professional lives.

In sum, this course holds as its core objective, development of student ability to:

- 1) APPRECIATE GROUP COMMUNICATION CONCEPTS
- 2) DEMONSTRATE EFFECTIVE GROUP INTERACTION SKILLS
- 3) IDENTIFY FEASIBLE GROUP GOALS
- 4) RECOGNIZE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF ETHICAL COMMUNICATION
- 5) APPLY CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

ASSIGNMENTS: There will be two group presentations, one group paper, five random and unannounced quiz/exercises, a mid-term exam, and a final exam. More detail is offered later in this document. The assignments will be weighted thus:

<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>POINT VALUE</u>
Group Presentation I	100
Group Presentation II	200
Group Paper	150
Quiz/Exercises	50
Peer Evaluation	50
Mid-term Exam	225
Final Exam	225
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Total	1000

GRADING SCALE:

<u>%</u>	<u>POINTS</u>	<u>LETTER</u>
97	≥970	A+
93	930-969	A
90	900-929	A-
87	870-899	B+
83	830-869	B
80	800-829	B-
77	770-799	C+
73	730-769	C
70	700-729	C-
67	670-699	D+
63	630-669	D
60	600-629	D-
<60	<600	F

REQUIREMENTS:

1) Attendance and participation are both essential. This is a **SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION** class. As such many of the assignments will be done in class. Accordingly, make-up is often impossible since the group interaction and attendant emergence of a group dynamic are the most important point. You should come to class on time. If any of these imperatives are beyond your abilities; **DROP THE CLASS NOW!**

2) All assignments must be completed on time. Late assignments will lose 10% from the earned point total per class period late. Many assignments will involve allotted class time. Since there is only so much of that commodity to go around, make-up may be impractical, if not impossible. If you or your group miss an assignment, you will likely have missed the assignment: **Permanently!** Due to scheduling problems inherent in this type of class, this usually means a zero for that assignment. In other words, if you are going to be unable to meet your obligations on time; **DROP THE CLASS NOW!**

3) Should you have a reasonable and *documented* excuse (see PS-22), make-up work is possible, but your responsibility to initiate. If you fail to notify or make arrangements with me to make up a missed assignment for which you have a *documented* excuse (see attendance above) within 24 hours of the assignment's due date you will receive a zero. I will not repeat lecture material -- see a classmate for missed notes.

4) You will be responsible for all material in the book and/or presented in class. Additionally, mastery of any one type of assignment alone will not result in a top grade. One must also demonstrate a superior appreciation for the body of theory that undergirds practice. If you feel that too much weight is placed on one particular assignment type; **DROP THE CLASS NOW!**

5) If you are taking this class under the illusion that it is an easy class; **DROP THE CLASS NOW! NEVER** approach me and say something like "I really need an A in this class because of my scholarship and my other classes are really hard and . . ." This IS a hard class – in many ways much harder than a subject that provides tight formulas for which there are objectively correct answers. "A" grades run at less than 10% which is about two per class per semester. There will be **NO** extra credit.

6) ***ALWAYS REMEMBER: YOUR LACK OF PREPAREDNESS, YOUR PERSONAL PROBLEMS, AND YOUR SCHOLARSHIP ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AND YOURS ALONE. NONE CONSTITUTE A CRISIS FOR ME. MY OBLIGATION IS TO THE STUDENTS WHO ARE HERE, PREPARED, AND MOTIVATED. I REFUSE TO DIMINISH THEIR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE THE LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR.***

ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN:

Group Presentation I (game activity) 100 pts.: 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 teach and explain one of the chapters from the textbook. The game should be educational and creative. Each group will present the game to the class. During this time, the group will provide an explanation of the purpose for the game, directions for playing the game, and an “example” round to demonstrate how to play the game. A 2-3 page typed, *printed* full-sentence outline will be required with copies for me and each member of the class. The outline must contain what the players should be learning and how well this game accomplishes that purpose. The quality of your explanation and the purposefulness of your game will be the major factor in determining your grade. Plan on leading a discussion at the end of your presentation.

Group paper 150 pts.: Your group will watch a movie (Remember the Titans, Breakfast Club, Reservoir Dogs, Ocean’s 11, Twelve Angry Men, Sneakers, etc. – or another movie which I must approve). Each student will apply a minimum of five small group theories and practices as discussed in class to your portion of the group paper. These papers must be done in class. Papers will be critiqued and graded, then students will make additions and/or corrections as indicated in my comments.

Group presentation II 200 pts.: Each group will present their group paper to the class using video examples from their chosen movie. Each group presentation should be approximately 20-25 minutes long. Presentations should not be read; deliveries should be conversational in nature employing effective speaking skills. A group PowerPoint is required. Evaluation will be based on: the creativity of your selection, clarity of presentation, effectiveness of organization, effectiveness of analysis, effectiveness of delivery and depth. Plan on leading a discussion at the end of your presentation.

Quiz/Exercises 50 pts.: Five random, unannounced activities will occur throughout the semester. They will be graded on a present/participating versus absent /indifferent basis. If you are here and involved, you will get the points.

Peer Evaluation 50 pts.: Since groups are inherently interdependent in nature; this means that the actions of one group member impact 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 work out ideally, as many students have realized from past negative group experiences. One group member may have trouble delegating tasks, take control, and do most of the work. Another group member may not contribute to group meetings, knowing that the others will pick up the slack (social loafing is real). Other varied problems may occur. All of these problems have negative impact on group social and task maintenance. As 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 anonymously rate his/her fellow group members at the end of the term, along with an explanation for each rating.

Exams 225 pts. each: The Midterm and Final exams will consist of objective questions such as true/false, multiple choice, matching, and definition.

SCHEDULE: To follow as separate document on Moodle.

FINALLY: *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 Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations can be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letter, you must meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.