

Small Group Communication

Comm 151: Section 8167

Fall 2013

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Office Hour: Monday 10:30 am

Textbook: Required reading: Communicating in Groups by Adams and Galanes, 8th Edition ISBN#: 978-0-07-353427-5. It's published by McGraw-Hill and available for a list price of 107.67 though much less expensive used versions should be available online and at the West Los Angeles College bookstore. You can also find it on Amazon for a much lower price and "Ebook" versions may also be available.

Introduction:

Welcome to COMM 151, Small Group Communication on-line!

My name is Bill Buchynski and I am excited to be teaching this course in Small Group Communication. We're going to engage in some fun and hopefully enlightening activities. You will not only be learning the principles of small group communication but will be applying them to some very remarkable situations.

This class will hopefully be of interest to you and a valuable resource for you professionally, socially and personally.

The first time that you login to the website look at the navigation bar on the left side of your screen. You will hopefully see the following headings: Home, Announcements, Syllabus, Modules, Assignments, Tests and Surveys, Discussion and Private Messages, Chat Room, Gradebook and Site Info. If any of those headings are missing, click on Site Info on the navigation bar and then Edit Tools which appears at the top of the screen. Check the headings on the list that are missing and then "Continue".

Start exploring the site. One of the first places to explore is the Discussion and Private Messages section. You will find the group that you are in in this section. All of your graded discussion also takes place here; in the forum corresponding to your group number. Your first assignment is important as it encourages you to get acquainted with your fellow group members and to devise a list of ethical standards which will guide your group throughout the semester. A number of you are encountering online coursework for the first time and, as such, anyone who makes an effort to take part in the discussion during the first week will receive credit for this assignment. At any rate, please make sure you become familiar with the ethical standards established by your group.

You will have an opportunity to get accustomed to taking quizzes in the first week and learn whether or not your computer is compatible with ETUDES-NG. Accordingly, the first quiz is a practice one and not worth any points. You will have one week to complete it. It is a means for you to familiarize yourself

with taking quizzes online and you may take the quiz as often as you like. If you discover in that time that your computer has a technical problem, please take all future quizzes/exams on a computer in the library at West Los Angeles College or make other arrangements.

Starting in week two, you will take a graded quiz on a particular chapter of the textbook in the "Assignments, Tests, and Surveys" section, discuss a topic at length in your small group in the "Discussion and Private Messages" section and complete a submittable assignment in the "Assignments, Tests and Surveys" section for credit. The submittable assignment consists of your **PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS** of how the group process is working for you and not merely a retelling of your group's conclusions. It is due approximately one day after discussion for that particular topic has ended in order to give you some time to reflect. Along with taking a quiz in the same week, you will have approximately two weeks each to take the mid-term and final.

The midterm and final exams last 60 minutes; the quizzes last 30 minutes. You need to make sure you complete the exam or quiz in the allotted time.

Quizzes/exams take place in the "Assignments, Tests, and Surveys" section. A time counter will appear on the screen when you start the quiz, showing how much time is left. Keep an eye on your watch or the time counter.

It is your responsibility to submit the quiz within 30 minutes. Quizzes consist of 10 multiple choice/true or false questions. Whereas, the Mid Term and Final have 20 multiple choice/true or false questions with a 60 minute time limit. Do not exceed the time limit for a quiz or exam. If you do, you will receive no points and will not be able to retake the quiz or exam. If your computer becomes disconnected or encounters other difficulty while you take a quiz or exam, you will not be able to retake it unless others experienced the same problem.

While taking a quiz or exam in the "Assignments, Tests, and Surveys" section, do not go to any other section. If you do, you may not be able to return to the "Assignments, Tests, and Surveys" section and, consequently, will not be allowed to finish the quiz/exam. You will not be able to retake the quiz or exam.

Do not submit your answers to quizzes or exams via email or through the "Discussion and Private Messages" section. If you do, you will receive no points.

Besides completing the quizzes within 30 minutes, and the exams within 60 minutes, you need to make sure to complete the quizzes before the due date. You are not allowed any makeups. You have nearly two weeks before the first graded quiz is due. Take the "Practice Quiz" to get used to the test taking process. It's not worth any points and you may take it as often as you like. You need to get used to the class and you are advised to maneuver around the site especially if you have never before taken a course in Etudes-NG.

Doing well in the course requires:

1. Reading the chapters in the textbook.

2. Going to "Assignments" to learn what submissable assignments you need to do and what to discuss in your group in the "Discussion and Private Messages" section.

3. Completing the quizzes, found under "Assignments, Tests, and Surveys" as well as the midterm and final exams and

4. Communicating your ideas to one another in your small groups in the "Discussion and Private Messages" section. YOU ARE REQUIRED TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT; THE FIRST POST BEING BY WEDNESDAY OF EACH WEEK.

Students with disabilitiesStudents with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the DSP&S Office in HLRC 121, 310-287-4450, Hours: M-Th: 8:30am to 6pm, Friday: 8:30am to 3pm.

PLEASE NOTE: There are NO MAKEUPS for missed submissable assignments, quizzes, the midterm or final exams. It is your responsibility to complete all work on time.

If you experience technical difficulties or run out of time while taking a quiz/exam and are unable to submit the work, you will, unfortunately, not be able to take it again. Accordingly, you will not receive any points. The only exception would be if other students experienced the same problem on a particular quiz or exam. Otherwise, there are no exceptions.

Please make sure you do all the quizzes, exams, and submissable assignments. Even if you participate in the forums but do not do the submissable assignments, you won't receive full points.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on both theory and practice of small group communication.

We will examine:

what constitutes a group;

verbal and nonverbal communication in groups;

how groups are structured;

the environment in which groups operate;

your role as a group member;

group decision-making;

leadership;

conflict management;

group development;

meeting management;

and how to observe group process and provide feedback.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

1. Develop a practical knowledge of small group communication theories, including leadership styles and decision-making strategies.
2. Develop interpersonal communication skills, enhancing performance in discussion groups.
3. Develop confidence in making group presentations as well as competence in written assignments and presentation of coherent arguments.
4. Apply the principles and concepts covered in this class to improve performance in functioning groups.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Critical Thinking: Analyze problems by differentiating fact from opinions, using evidence, and using sound reasoning to specify multiple solutions and their consequences.

Communication: Communicate thought in a clear, well-organized manner to persuade, inform, and convey ideas in academic, work, family, and community settings.

Self-awareness/Interpersonal: Apply self-assessment and reflection strategies to interpersonal, work, community, career, and educational pathways.

GRADING POLICY

Students will be evaluated on their critical thinking skills in the "Assignments" and "Discussion and Private Messages" sections, and their knowledge of the textbook through quizzes and examinations.

Your grade will be based upon the total number of points that you earn for specific assignments, quizzes, and examinations during the semester. Listed below are the points corresponding to grades.

A = 446-495

B = 396-445

C = 347-395

D = 322-346

F = Below 322

Point Breakdown for Specific Assignments and Examinations:

Written exercises in the "Assignments" section: 195 pts.

Weekly Quizzes 100 pts. (10 quizzes)

Midterm Exam 100 pts.

Final Exam 100 pts.

PLEASE NOTE: Even if you participate in your small group, unless you do all the "submittable assignments," you cannot receive maximum points.

The main focus of this course is on the chapters in the textbook. If you do the weekly reading, you should have no difficulty doing well on the quizzes and exams. You will have ample opportunity to discuss what you have read with your classmates in the Forums.

Each week or so, you will take a quiz and do an exercise in the Assignments section. You will also be given a discussion assignment to do in your small group in the "Discussion and Private Messages" section.

Your final grade will be based upon your point accumulation, your level of involvement in the discussion as well as a subjective assessment of the quality of your contribution within your group.

Dialogue among class members in the forums is essential in this class. Because the class is entirely online, it is important that you make your entries on a timely basis and that you make a significant contribution.

In order to allow you the freedom of exploring ideas in small group discussions, my role will be that of an observer; often a silent one.

Class Participation in the "Discussion and Private Messages" section:

The Discussion and Private Messages" section is a forum. "A forum" was a Roman marketplace. Nowadays it's a medium for open discussion.

If you click on the "Discussion and Private Messages" section (to the left of this page) you'll see the following forums:

Which Small Group Am I in?

Student Space

Group 1-5

Student Lounge

Let me explain the purpose of each of these forums:

WHICH SMALL GROUP AM I IN?

You have been assigned to a particular group (1-5.) Check to see which group you are in. One of the first things that you will do as a group is to decide when and how often you will log on. Though ideal, it is not necessary to log on at the same time as your fellow group members. What you must do, however, is log on in a timely manner because each assignment has a due date/time. (Please note: you won't be able to change to another group once you've been assigned to a group.)

CLASS FORUM

Use this forum to post the findings of specific assignments for your group. You will be informed as to which assignments should be posted in this forum.

GROUP 1-5

This is where small group discussion takes place and where you earn points.

STUDENT LOUNGE

This is your place to discuss anything pertinent to what you've been reading or discussing in your group. I will not monitor this forum.

In the "Discussion and Private Messages" section, you can discuss theories, share ideas, and solve problems. You will present your own ideas and challenge others' points of view. In this way, you will be aware of a variety of viewpoints on any particular subject.

This course focuses on small group discussion, encouraging interaction in small groups as a way to develop your decision-making abilities and understand specific concepts.

In your assigned small group, you will reflect on a problem and offer solutions to solve it. You will be able to develop your decision-making skills as well as demonstrate your understanding of specific communication theories. You will have the opportunity to communicate ideas, and apply steps in a decision-making process.

To get points, you must apply the information you have learned from the textbook when you exchange ideas and reflect on suggested solutions in your small group.

You will also be involved in role-playing exercises in your small group. Here you will recreate a real-life situation by acting out a particular role. You will do this with the "One Syllable Talk" exercise, and with the "Meet the Mediator" exercise. Role-playing enables you to understand other people's point of view and find possible solutions to solve their problems.

Small Group Assignments

Whenever you are asked to discuss a topic in your small group, you must go to your assigned group.

You must stay in your assigned group throughout the semester; however, there will be opportunities to talk to the entire class in the Class Forum or Lounge.

Submittable Assignments

In the "Assignments" section, you will read a case study and be asked to discuss it in your small group. You will also be asked to write a short response in the box provided, which you will then submit. Once again, your written response consists primarily of your personal observations of the exercise.

To receive maximum points, you must discuss the issue in your small groups FIRST, and THEN submit your written response.

I will be monitoring the "Discussion and Private Messages" section on a regular basis to see if you are participating significantly in your small group discussion. Remember that it is only AFTER those discussions that you submit your individual comments through the "Assignments" section.

I usually check the submittable assignments a day or two after they are due. If you see that your submittable assignment hasn't received a grade, it may be because you haven't submitted it or that you have but have not communicated in your small group.

You must do two things to garner full points:

1. discuss the issue in your small group and then,
2. submit a personal response.

Sometimes you will be asked simply to comment upon a particular chapter we have been studying. In this case, you would simply submit your response in the box provided and not discuss it in your small group. If your response is relevant, you will receive maximum points.

Please do not submit your assignments to me via the "Discussion and Private Messages" section or by email. You won't receive any points if you do. All responses should be written in the box provided in the "Assignments" section.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Each quiz focuses on one chapter of the textbook. The Mid-Term and Final Exams each cover five chapters. You will ultimately be responsible for Chapters 1 through 10.

QUIZZES

All quizzes consist of multiple choice and/or true/false questions. Each quiz will focus on one chapter of the textbook that you read that week. Each week you should read one chapter of the book. The quizzes are provided by the publisher of your textbook.

Week 2-Chapter 1-Small Groups as the Heart of Society

Week 3-Chapter 2-Groups as Structured Open Systems

Week 4-Chapter 3-Communication Principles for Group Members

Week 5-Chapter 5-Working With Diversity in the Small Group

Week 6-Chapter 6-Creative and Critical Thinking in the Small Group

Week 7-Chapter 4-Becoming A Group

Weeks 8 and 9-Mid Term covering first five chapters of text.

Week 10-Chapter 7-Group Problem-Solving Procedures

Week 11-Chapter 8-Managing Conflicts Productively

Week 12-Chapter 9-Appling Leadership Principles

Week 13-Chapter 10-Planning, Organizing and Presenting Small Group....

Week 14-Chapter review.

Weeks 15 and 16-Final Exam focusing on chapters 6 through 10.

If you read the assigned chapters from the textbook, you should have no difficulty with the quizzes. The only Chapter that you will not be quizzed on is Chapter 11.

MIDTERM EXAM

The midterm exam consists of multiple choice and true/false questions. It will focus on the first five chapters of the textbook.

FINAL EXAM

The final exam also consists of multiple choice and true/false questions focusing on chapters 6 through 10 of the textbook.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY POLICY

"Violations of academic integrity of any type by a student provides grounds for disciplinary action by the instructor or college. Violations of Academic Integrity include, but are not limited to, the following actions: cheating on an exam, plagiarism, working together on an assignment, paper or project when the instructor has specifically stated students should not do so, submitting the same term paper to more than one instructor, or allowing another individual to assume one's identity for the purpose of enhancing one's grade. For more information on the Standards of Student Conduct refer to the college catalog available in hardcopy and online at www.lattc.edu."

Disability Support Services (DSS) Accommodation Statement*

"Students with disabilities who need any assistance or accommodations should contact the instructor". Students should also contact the Disabled Student Programs & Services (DSPS) center located in SSB 320 or call 310-287-4420." dsps@wlaac.edu

Classroom Notes:

The modules contain supplemental information that will enhance your understanding of the material covered in class. They are another way of looking at the material in your textbook. If you find a discrepancy between the text and a module, defer to the information in your text. **YOU MUST READ THE TEXTBOOK TO PASS THIS CLASS.**

How to Proceed:

Remember, this is a sixteen week course.

For each week, read an assigned chapter in the textbook. After you have read, digested, and analyzed the pages from the textbook and my notes, take the quiz in the "Assignments, Tests and Surveys" section. Read about a problem that you will have to discuss in your assigned small group in the "Discussion and Private Messages" section and after contributing to the online discussion, go to the assignments section and submit your personal response.

I will answer any questions and respond to any comments you have regarding the course through Private Messages or email.

Proceed with an open, adventurous mind and you will succeed. Good luck.

Bill Buchynski

(With great acknowledgment and thanks to Nick Smith for his guidance and material support)