

SYLLABUS
COMM 151: SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION (SECTION 8169)
Fall 2013

Instructor: Francis Nicholas Smith, M.Phil., M.A.

Office hours: Contact me through ETUDES "Private Messages" to set up a virtual meeting.

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Course Description

Transfer: UC: CSU

Units: 3

This course focuses on the skills necessary for effective communication in small group discussions. Topics covered include creative decision-making, conflict management, anger management, leadership, groupthink, problem solving and the nature of power.

Focusing 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.

Student Learning Outcomes

"B. Communication: Effectively communicate thought in a well-organized manner to persuade, inform, and convey ideas in academic, work, family and community settings."

In assignments and class exercises, exchange ideas and present different points of view.

At end of the course, the successful student will be able to define, analyze, and apply group problem-solving concepts.

Speech Program Outcomes

- "Employ effective interpersonal communication skills and strategies that foster improved relationships with other individuals in dyads or small groups."
- "Employ small group communication strategies."

Course Objectives

- Employ conflict resolution techniques
- Distinguish differences in gender communication awareness
- Demonstrate empathy
- Employ effective interpersonal skills
- Employ good listening techniques
- Participate in discussion in classes, in the workplace and in the community
- Analyze nonverbal communications including artificial communication

Required Textbook

Communicating in Groups; Applications and Skills, 8th Edition, by Katherine Adams and Gloria Galanes (2012). Published by McGraw-Hill

The textbook is available at West Los Angeles College bookstore. It is also available to rent. If you use an older edition, please note that some information from the current edition may be missing, and there is a difference in page numbering.

Computer Access/Technical Requirements

- ALL of the coursework will take place online.
- You must have access to a computer that meets technical requirements. If you haven't already done so, please make sure that your computer is properly configured for ETUDES.
- To avoid possible computer mishaps, please use Firefox browser instead of Safari.

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. There is no extra credit.

Your grade will be based upon the total number of points that you earn for specific assignments, quizzes, examinations, and small group participation during the semester.

Breakdown of points (maximum 310 points)

Small Group Participation: 40 points

Assignments: 110 points

Weekly Quizzes: 60 points (6 quizzes)

Midterm Exam: 50 points

Final Exam: 50 points

A = 279 - 310 points

B = 248 - 278 points

C = 217 - 247 points

D = 186 - 216 points

F = 185 and below

Course Format

This class meets only online at the ETUDES course site. You are expected to participate actively in online discussions, complete written assignments, and take quizzes and exams.

The main focus of this course is on the chapters in the textbook. You must have access to the book in order to do well in this course. 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, you will take a quiz and do an assignment in the "Assignments, Tests and Surveys" section. You will also be given a discussion topic to do in your small group in the "Discussion and Private Messages" section.

Your final grade will be based upon an average of all the grades that you have received throughout the course.

PRIVATE MESSAGES

Please feel free to send me a message if you have any questions about your own work.

"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 you'll see the following forums:

Which Small Group Am I in?

Questions

Class Discussions

Group A-D

Let me explain the purpose of each of these forums:

WHICH SMALL GROUP AM I IN?

I have assigned you to a particular group (A-D.) Check to see which group you are in. (Please note: you won't be able to change to another group once you've been assigned to a group).

QUESTIONS

Here you will have the opportunity to ask and answer each other's questions about the course.

CLASS DISCUSSIONS

Use this forum to discuss a topic with the ENTIRE class. This forum is reserved mainly for the "Meet the Mediator" assignment.

DISCUSSION BOARD

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

Whenever you are asked to discuss a topic in your small group, you must go to your assigned group. Someone will create a new heading for each new topic you discuss each week. For example, you are asked to discuss difficulties you have with listening, the title might be, "WEEK 3, DISCUSSION: POOR LISTENING SKILLS." You will post specific problems that you have with listening, then wait for a group member to respond, then you would respond to their comments, creating a dialogue. In the light of this being a small group discussion class, you should post **at least five times for every topic you are required to discuss**. PLEASE NOTE: there is a deadline to complete these weekly discussion questions. You will not be able to post after the deadline. Each discussion question is worth 5-10 points.

I will make an assessment of the quality of your small group participation. Your postings should explain why you agree or disagree with a particular viewpoint. A contribution is more than "I agree;" it's "I agree with Catherine because..."

Dialogue between 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.

You must stay in your assigned group throughout the semester; however, there will be opportunities to talk to the entire class in the "Class Discussions" section in "Assignments, Tests and Surveys."

There are weekly deadlines for discussion topics. If you post a response to the first week's discussion during the last week of the course, you won't receive any points.

ASSIGNMENTS

When you click on the "Assignments, Tests and Surveys" section, you will see the present week's assignment. You will be asked to write a response to a question or to a case study, which you will then submit to me. Scroll to the bottom of the page and you'll see a box entitled "Assignment Text." That's where you write your response. No attachments, please. 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.

STUDENTS ARE ALLOWED TO SUBMIT EACH ASSIGNMENT ONLY ONCE. All submissions are accepted "as is." It is your responsibility to make sure that you are submitting the correct document. Proofread your work. Excessive spelling and grammatical errors may result in points being deducted.

WEEKLY QUIZZES

All quizzes/exams are provided by the publisher of the textbook.

Quizzes and exams are found in the "Assignments, Tests and Surveys" section. Quizzes and exams consist of multiple choice and true/false questions. Each quiz will focus on one chapter of the textbook that you read that week.

WE DO NOT READ ALL OF THE CHAPTERS IN THE TEXTBOOK. Here are the chapters that we will read:

- **Chapter 1: Small Groups as the Heart of Society**
- **Chapter 3: Communication Principles for Group Members**
- **Chapter 4: Becoming a Group**
- **Chapter 6: Creative and Critical Thinking in the Small Group**
- **Chapter 8: Managing Conflicts Productively**
- **Chapter 9: Applying Leadership Principles**

If you read the assigned chapters from the textbook, you should have no difficulty with the quizzes.

MIDTERM EXAM

The midterm exam consists of multiple choice and true/false questions. It will focus on the following chapters of the textbook: Small Groups as the Heart of Society, Communication Principles for Group Members, and Becoming a Group.

FINAL EXAM

The final exam also consists of multiple choice and true/false questions. It will focus on the following chapters of the textbook: Creative and Critical Thinking in the Small Group, Managing Conflicts Productively, Applying Leadership Principles.

MAKEUPS

PLEASE NOTE: There are no make-ups for missed assignments, quizzes, the midterm or final exams. It is your responsibility to complete all work on time.

If there is a medical emergency or a serious illness or death of a close family friend, then you must send documentation to the Distance Learning office at West LA College and arrange to take your missed quiz/exam at the college. I will not send the missed assignments via email.

If you start the wrong quiz or experience technical difficulties while taking a quiz/exam/assignment, (if your computer gets disconnected, for example, or you run out of time), and are unable to submit the work, you will not be able to take it again. Accordingly, you will not receive any points. There are no exceptions.

DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE!

Late work will not be accepted. Giving time extensions to some and not to others is simply not fair to everyone.

CLASSROOM NOTES (MODULES)

My notes (in "Modules") ask you to focus on particular areas of a chapter from the textbook. If you read my notes, you will be better prepared for the quiz. I have also included "Lecture Notes" or summaries of each chapter as well as other material to supplement your reading. **THIS SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION WILL NOT NECESSARILY BE ON THE QUIZZES AND EXAMS.** In other words, **YOU MUST READ THE TEXTBOOK TO PASS THIS CLASS.**

DISABLED STUDENT SERVICES

If you know or think that you have any learning or physical disabilities, please contact Dr. Duke in the Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS) Office in HLRC 121 at (310) 287-4450. The DSPS will then contact your instructors to notify them of needed accommodations, such as additional testing time, or a note taker. If you require an accommodation for this class, please speak with me.

DROPPING THE COURSE

Should you decide to drop the class, it is your responsibility to go to the Admissions Office and fill out the appropriate card. Failure to do so could result in an "F" in the

class. Do not assume that I will drop you. If you do, you might find yourself with an F grade at the end of the course.

If you drop the course, be sure to do so at the Admissions and Business Offices and keep your receipt. Pay attention to drop dates in the Schedule of Classes.

ADAMECIC INTEGRITY

Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. When there is evidence of cheating or plagiarism in classroom work, the instructor may assign a failing grade, "F," or zero points to the examination or assignment in which the alleged cheating or plagiarism occurred. In addition, the vice president of Student Services will be notified. Before a substandard grade is issued the instructor will provide the student with supporting documentation of the plagiarism or cheating charge. Instructors have the authority to use plagiarism-detecting instruments such as "Turn It In" to detect academic dishonesty.

Sadly, every year there are a couple of students who buy essays online, or cut and paste their discussion answers from Google. Ironically, it is your fellow classmates who are the first to alert me of cheating. You DON'T need to cheat; if you think very carefully about the question, you WILL be able to answer it.

In the next few weeks you'll be asked to explain certain terms from your textbook as well as review a film. You need to provide your own honest feedback to the questions. Do not go to the web and cut and paste information, pretending that it is your own. Do not buy essays. Adopting the words or ideas of someone else as if they are your own is literary theft. If you want to discuss someone's ideas for an assignment, you must cite the source.

For assistance with classroom projects, papers and assignments, please visit the Learning Skills Center, HLRC.