

SPE 210: Small Group Communication

Spring 2005 / March 15 - May 10



Instructor: Jen Almjeld

Class schedule & location: TRF 8:00 – 9:50 a.m. PA 135

Credit hours: 3

Prerequisites: ENG 111

Office hours: By appointment only

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Course Description

Introduces the basic elements of communication and small group theory as employed in typical small group situations. Emphasis is placed upon the individual's responsibility in the discussion setting, and the course focuses on the development of leadership abilities and conflict management techniques within each group. The problem-solving process for task-oriented groups is analyzed via group interaction.

Course Objectives

This course is a general requirement to enable students to enrich their roles as communicators in small groups. The student will also learn to be an effective listener and analyze communication as an on-going process. The course should enhance communication awareness and effectiveness in business, social, and personal relationships.

1. The student will understand the principles of general communication theory and small group theory.
2. Through formal and informal research methods, the student will procure source material to use as information and evidence during a discussion.
3. The student will evaluate the information and evidence obtained by group members through participation in workshops and discussions.
4. The student will compare and contrast types of discussion formats through participation in panel symposium and forum discussions.
5. The student will identify some of the varied roles people play through participation in role playing activities.
6. The student will restructure the overall group interaction, the group's prevailing emotional climate, the group's major leadership climate, the major roles performed by each group member, and the ways the group could have interacted more effectively through analysis papers.

Text

Beebe, Steven A. and Masterson, John T. *Communicating In Small Groups: Principles and Practices* (7th ed.) New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 2003.

Instructional Methods:

The course content will be presented using lectures, question and answer sessions, discussions, small-group activities, peer response, and individual conferences with the instructor. Ample opportunity will exist for students to demonstrate mastery of concepts taught while delivering presentations to the class.

Classroom Conduct Guidelines

All members of this class are expected to conduct themselves as mature members of a learning community. This class will challenge your views, attitudes, and beliefs and encourage each of you to express yourselves; however, racial, sexist, or other oppressive language will not be tolerated under any

circumstances. Listen, discuss, and debate all topics in a mature, respectful way. If you have any questions about the appropriateness of your rhetoric, please see me.

Late/make-up work

Written assignments: All assignments and exams must be submitted on the day they are scheduled. Assignments turned in late receive a **10%** reduction in points for each day. The conditions for work being accepted late are that you have a valid excuse (serious illness that prohibits you from getting your work to me, death in the family, etc.), and you must contact me before the assignment is due (if at all possible).

Graded in-class activities: Cannot be made up.

NO WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED MORE THAN ONE WEEK PAST THE DUE DATE.

Academic Honesty

Each student is expected to submit original and individual work. Cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated. Remember to cite any work that is not your own.

Please refer to the college's policy on cheating and plagiarism found in the College Catalog. Read it and understand it. Plagiarism is the use (either intentional or unintentional) of another's work or ideas and passing them off as your own. This includes copying other's exam answers, pirating information off the Internet, not citing sources correctly, or having another person do your work for you.

Attendance

Consider coming to class each day in exactly the way you would consider showing up for work. It is important to inform your boss of illnesses and other necessary absences as soon as possible (preferably before the absence) to avoid being fired for a lack of responsibility and dependability. Because this course emphasizes live performances it is impossible for you to succeed in this course if you do not attend regularly. Please note that a portion of your grade comes from attendance and participation in class. You will be permitted a total of three absences – excused or unexcused.

Miscellaneous

Assignments or tests may be altered and dates changed or eliminated at the instructor's discretion. The schedule for the course is tentative and will almost assuredly change depending upon the progress or problems our class may encounter. Announcements regarding changes in schedule will be made as early as possible. We will refer to the syllabus frequently, please bring it and your textbook to class regularly.

Support services

Writing Center: The Writing Center offers friendly assistance to help students improve their writing skills. Students may bring notes, prewrites, outlines, and drafts to the Writing Center and professionally trained writers will assist them in developing the skills necessary to become independent and effective writers. Students may call (567) 429-3628 to schedule an appointment; however, the Center welcomes walk-ins. The Center is located in Room 104 of the Center for Development Training at 1300 N. Cory St. Hours vary so visit the Owens Community College Web site for information.

Disability Resource Services Office: Individualized services and/or accommodations intended to ensure equal opportunity for all students are available at the Disability Resource Services Office. Anyone who may be eligible for services are encouraged to call (567) 661-7194.

Assignments

Assignments consist of individual and small group exercises. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the listed due date. If rescheduling is necessary, a 10% deduction for each day beyond the

original due date will be assessed. All written assignments are to be typed, using APA style, with the exception of in-class work.

All assignments and exams must be completed to get a passing grade for the course.

Two Individual Application Papers (25 pts each, 50 pts total)

The application papers are designed to help you better understand, integrate, and apply the course material. They involve applying the concepts we are learning in class to understand dynamics of a formal group (e.g., musical band, sports team, work group). Each application paper should include a description of the concept or theory and your analysis of a specific situation applying the concepts of your interest. Papers should be 2 pages long.

Paper #1: Ch 1-6 (Small group communication). **Due April 8**

Paper #2: Ch 7-10 (Problem solving, managing conflict). **Due April 26**

Grading criteria: clarity of writing, coherence, integration of course material, and your critical thought about the group process

Class Material Presentations (50 pts)

To allow students practice in preparing presentations in small group settings, each student will sign up for a chapter presentation. The presentations will be fairly informal and should focus on one concept from the material to be covered in class that the student found particularly interesting. Presenters are asked to “teach” other group members the concept in creative and engaging ways (skits, worksheets, Q&A, etc.)

Problem Solving Project (220 pts)

For this group assignment, you will have to find the best and most logical alternative to solve the issue/problem that is of interest to you. Your work will consist of researching the facts surrounding the issue, finding the proper criteria to evaluate possible solutions, evaluating at least two alternative solutions and recommending one of the solutions to be implemented.

The goal of this assignment is twofold: (1) to get experience in decision-making process in small groups following the Traditional Approach to Group Problem Solving and (2) to enhance analytical skills through critical evaluation of a particular issue/problem. Your work will result in a 15-18 minute oral persuasive presentation-report with a 5-6 page outline. Although some class time will be set aside for group meetings, your groups will need to meet outside of class to work on the project.

Grading criteria: creativity, thoroughness, preparedness, logic, coherence, clarity, and professionalism

You will be following the Traditional Approach (Ch 9, p. 220-234) to research and solve your problem. While following the Traditional Approach steps, you will have to complete several graded individual and group tasks that will be due on the following dates:

Task 1. Identify and define the problem (group; 20 pts)

Brainstorm as a group possible issues you would like to explore and work on. Write a clear problem identification statement in 2-3 concise paragraphs. **Due March 29.**

Task 2. Research abstracts (individual; 50 pts)

Find 3 sources that you think could be useful for your group project and construct a half- to one-page, double-spaced abstract for each of three sources. Explain how the sources are going to help you clarify the problem, find criteria to evaluate possible solutions, or suggest alternative solutions. Print or photocopy the articles and turn them in together with your abstracts. Use the databases and various index sources available through our library. **Due April 19.**

Task 3. Evaluation criteria and solutions (group; 20 pts)

After discussing and sharing research you gathered, list the five criteria you will be using to evaluate solutions and suggest two or more alternative solutions to resolve your issue/problem. **Due April 22.**

Task 4. Report outline (group; 50 pts)

Write an outline of a final report following the Traditional Approach framework. Your report should have the following sections: Problem Identification, Problem Analysis, Solution Criteria, Solution Suggestions, Solution Evaluation, and Selection. **Due May 5.**

Task 5. Persuasive presentation report (group; 50 pts)

Persuasively present your decision process and results, explaining the issue, its analysis, selected criteria for solutions, and recommended solution, and implementation plan. Your time limit for presentation is 15-18 minutes. Presentations will be given on **May 5 and 6.**

Task 6. Peer and self evaluation (individual; 30 pts)

You will have to evaluate the participation of each group member and yourself. You will use the following criteria for evaluating: input into the project, communication competence, leadership abilities, attitude, quality of work, attendance of group meetings. **Due May 6.**

Group Log (30 pts)

Your group is required to keep a Group Log of all meetings in and out of class. Each entry should include:

1. Date, time, and location
2. Members present
3. Tasks achieved/assigned
4. Process comments (regarding communication, decision-making, issues)
5. Name of the record keeper on that day (vary this responsibility)

Group Logs must be kept up-to-date and will be checked periodically 3-4 times in the semester on unannounced basis. The final group log will be turned in at the end of the semester for a grade. I recommend each group purchase a notebook that can be used for this log.

In-Class Activities / Classroom Community (100 pts)

At certain times during this course you will be asked to complete a combination of small group and individual assignments. These are comprised of mostly unannounced in-class activities. You will be notified in advance of any assignment that requires work outside of class. Classroom community grade will depend on your attendance and active participation during class discussions and activities. Perfect attendance does not guarantee highest points.

Exams (400 pts)

There will be four individual and/or group exams in this course (100 pts each).

Final Grade

Two Application Papers	50 (2X25)	Grading Scale A = 100-90%; B = 89-80% C = 79-70% D = 69-60% F = 59-0%
Class Material Presentations	50	
Group Presentation	100	
Group (personal?) Log	30	
Movie analysis paper	50	
In-class Activities/Attendance	100	
Response Papers	50 (2X25)	
Tests	400 (4X100)	
Total	900	

Tentative Course Calendar

- Week 1 **Mar 15** Introduction to the course and the syllabus; Class activity on group interaction;
Read: Traditional Approach to Group Problem Solving (Ch. 9 p. 217-234) and Chp 1
Mar 17 Discuss Chp. 1; Discuss group project for term; Choose groups; *Read: Chp 2*
Mar. 18 Discuss Chp. 2; *Read: Chp 3*
- Week 2 **Mar 22** Discuss Chp.3; Discuss library research and prepare for library exercise
Mar 24 Library exercise day – Schedule time to meet with groups in library
Mar 25 No class – Holiday; *Group should identify a problem in 1 written page*
- Week 3 **Mar 29.** Review for Exam One; **Problem description due**
Mar 31 Exam One (Ch 1, 2, & 3); *Read: Chp 4*
Apr 1 Discuss Chp 4; *Read: Chp 5*
- Week 4 **Apr 5** Discuss Chp 5; *Read: Chp 6*
Apr 7 Discuss Chp 6
Apr 8 Movie-Twelve Angry Men; **Application Paper 1 due**; *Write a 1-page response to movie for Monday presentations*
- Week 5 **Apr 12** Review for Exam Two; Present findings from movie
Apr 14 Exam Two (Ch 4, 5, & 6); *Read: Chp 7*
Apr 15 Discuss Chp 7; *Read: Chp 8 and complete abstracts for group project*
- Week 6 **Apr 19** Discuss Chp 8; **Research abstracts due**; *Read: Chp 9*
Apr 21 Discuss Chp 9; *Read: Chp 10 and work on evaluation criteria and solutions*
Apr 22 Discuss Chp 10; **Evaluation criteria and solutions due**
- Week 7 **Apr 26** Review for Exam Three; **Application Paper 2 due**
Apr 28 Exam Three. (Ch 7, 8, 9, & 10); *Read: Chp 11*
Apr 29 Discuss Chp 11; *Read: Chp 12*
- Week 8 **May 3** Discuss Chp 12; *Group should finalize final project outline*
May 5 Group project report outline due; Begin group project presentations
May 6 Peer and self-evaluation for group project due; Final group project presentations; Review for final exam
- Finals **May10 – 8-9:45 am -- FINAL EXAM** (Ch 11 & 12)