July 18, 2013

1. College: **Liberal and Applied Arts**
2. Department: **Languages, Cultures and Communication**
3. Course status: **existing; requires modification**
4. Course prefix and number: **COM 215**
5. Course title: **Small Group Communication**
6. Course catalog description: **Theories, principles and skills involved in group communication. Experiential focus upon problem analysis, problem solving, and decision-making.**
7. Number of semester credit hours: **3**
8. Estimated total course enrollment per year: **150**
9. Course prerequisites and/or required qualifications for enrolling in the class: **Prerequisite: COM 170 (Being modified to no longer have a prerequisite)**
10. Course **is not/will not be** available online.
11. Foundational Component Area: **Communication Oral Communication**
12. Explain why this course fits into this foundation component area: **This course meets the Coordinating Board's description of communication courses because it focuses on the application of small group communication competencies related to problem solving, decision-making, conflict management, leadership, and written, oral, and visual communication. Through a semester research group project students must coordinate as a team to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data in a local nonprofit to generate evidence-based conclusions about the organization's strengths and weaknesses in small group communication. Using the conclusions from the study, students work with their teammates to develop a written, oral, and visual presentation of their conclusions and a proposed skills training to address organizational weaknesses. Throughout this process, students must utilize communications technologies to effectively coordinate their activities to complete a group goal/task and demonstrate both personal and social responsibility to generate effective and appropriate social and task related outcomes.**
13. Core Objectives
    o Critical Thinking - Small group communication enhances understanding and competencies in critical thinking by using problem solving steps, decision-making procedures, constructive criticism, and formal and informal group roles. Instructors will guide students through the six steps implemented to group problem solving, including problem definition and problem analysis (requires research), criteria generation, brainstorming alternatives, decision-making to select the best alternative, implementation, and evaluation. Analysis, evaluation, inquiry, and synthesis of information are necessary skills, especially, for problem definition and analysis, decision-making, and evaluation. Creative thinking and innovation are necessary skills, especially, for criteria generation and brainstorming. Decision-making procedures, such as idea writing and Nominal Group Technique, further develop skills and principles associated with creative thinking and innovation in a group context. Students will analyze group decision-making procedures and outcomes to generate evaluations of one another and the group as a whole in order to provide ongoing constructive criticism to maximize

group creativity, effectiveness, and efficiency. Finally, group roles reinforce the necessity of critical thinking. A critical advisor is a required formal role in the group, which entails analyzing group structures and procedures to ensure full group participation and avoiding groupthink – defined as poor decision-making resulting from a lack of participation from diverse students and failure to question/challenge group processes and outcomes. Each student's mastery of critical thinking will be demonstrated by means of a group project and presentation that is the culmination of the semester's coursework.

o Communication Skills - Communication skills are necessary at the interpersonal, group, and organizational levels as groups bridge the interpersonal and organizational strata of communication contexts. At the interpersonal level, small group communication builds effective written development and expression of ideas between students engaging in problem solving techniques and decision making in order to achieve task goals. Relying on mediated communication such as email or texting, students must coordinate their additive and conjunctive tasks via written communication to work as a team. Instructors will explain and provide verbal and written instruction for conducting group research and developing research projects into an organized presentation. Furthermore, groups work to complete a research paper that documents the process of data collection, analysis, and problem solving for an organization. Grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, vocabulary, and formatting are important grading components to the group written work. In face-to-face group meetings, students must employ oral and visual communication to communicate and record the group process. At the organizational level, groups make both informal and formal presentations to the class, in which they are evaluated on their collective and individual competencies related to development of an organized and well-supported presentation, effective use of visual aids (i.e. PowerPoint with graphs, charts, diagrams, and video), professionalism, oral clarity and vocal variety, and ability to express the implementation of small group principles and vocabulary in the context of actual group work. Each student's mastery of communication skills will be demonstrated by means of a group project and presentation that is the culmination of the semester's coursework.

o Teamwork - Small group communication is primarily focused on discussion, problem solving, decision-making, conflict management, and leadership skills to equip groups to work as a team to accomplish task and social functions of group goals. Students work together to complete research and project goals throughout the course, culminating in a group presentation. At the beginning of the course, instructors provide an overview of the teamwork process, which is reinforced as each step is undertaken in the course. Group outcomes are connected to the skills, abilities, and motivations of group members to coordinate their activities to understand and complete group goals. Group cohesion, communication satisfaction, diversity, and group structure are tied to effective discussion of different alternatives, decision-making to reach creative solutions, and meeting management. Each student's mastery of teamwork will be demonstrated by means of a group project and presentation that is the culmination of the semester's coursework.

- o Personal Responsibility - To coordinate task completion, small group members must not only be other-oriented in their communication but must also be self-aware. Instruction and a class activity relating to the impact of the student's personal attitudes and perspectives on small group communication occurs in the first week of the course. Understanding personality and communication traits and styles and becoming a high-self monitor (conscious of communicative choices and how they may be interpreted) are connected to improved conflict management skills and increased leadership potential within a group. Furthermore, students must consider their personal motivations and inclinations in light of the group context to make decisions that serve themselves and the group simultaneously. Throughout each step of the group project, students will apply the principles of conscious communicative choices inherent in group communication as they work with their groups and external organizations. Each student's mastery of personal responsibility will be demonstrated by means of a group project and presentation that is the culmination of the semester's coursework.

Contact person for questions about this submission:

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