

COM 215 Small Group Communication

Semester, Class Time, Class Location

Instructor:

Office:

Phone:

Office Hours:

Teaching Hours:

Department: Languages, Cultures, and Communication

Appointments:

Course Materials:

Myers, S.A. and Campbell, C.M. (2008). *Fundamentals of Small Group Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Course Description: Theories, principles and skills involved in group communication. Experiential focus upon problem analysis, problem solving, and decision-making. Prerequisite: COM 170. (Being modified to no longer have a prerequisite)

University Core Curriculum Objectives

- **Critical Thinking:** to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- **Communication Skills:** to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
- **Teamwork:** to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
- **Personal Responsibility:** to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making

Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:

- Understand what constitutes and characterizes a small group. [**Critical Thinking**]
- Understand and demonstrate small group communication competencies related to discussion, problem solving, decision making, and presenting. [**Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Teamwork**]
- Recognize and address challenges to small group communication in the research process with a local nonprofit organization through multiple methods of data collection. [**Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Teamwork, Personal Responsibility**]
- Understand the role of diversity in small group communication. [**Personal Responsibility**]
- Understand and demonstrate roles within small groups. [**Teamwork**]
- Utilize small group communication in service to a local nonprofit organization. [**Communication Skills, Teamwork, Personal Responsibility**]

Communication Studies Program Learning Outcomes:

1. **Theory Knowledge:** Students majoring in Communication Studies should display comprehension of major communication theories.
2. **Theory Application:** Students majoring in Communication Studies will apply the major theories in the field to communicate effectively in a variety of settings.

- 3. Research Methods:** Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to use and demonstrate understanding of appropriate methodology in critical, humanistic, or social scientific paradigms in examining research questions in communication.
- 4. Diversity and Freedom of Expression:** Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to recognize the central role of diversity and freedom of expression in a global community.
- 5. Constitutive Nature of Communication:** Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the constitutive nature of communication, which includes forces that enable and constrain communication such as technology, ethics, and organizational life.
- 6. Higher Order Thinking:** Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to demonstrate oral and written competence in logical and critical thinking

Instructor's Expectations:

It should be understood by all students enrolled in this course that education is not a commodity. Therefore, no student should expect a passing grade simply because you attend class, turn in assignments and pay tuition. Instead, students, as well as your instructor, should always remember that course grades are based on achievement, not effort or time. Simply put, students must earn their score in this course based on mastery of the materials and the instructions provided by your instructor.

Course Adaptations

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to <http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/>.

Grade Withheld Policy (Semester Grades A-54)

http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/semester_grds.asp

II. Withheld Grades

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to:

- Attend and participate in each class meeting,
- Arrive to class prior to class beginning,
- Be physically and intellectually prepared to listen to the lecture/speech (read assigned chapters from the textbook),
- Demonstrate respect for the instructor and classmates,
- Take notes, and
- Turn in all coursework either early or on time.

Absence: An absence is indicated by the instructor's mark by the student's name on a roll sheet that signifies the student was present for class.

- If a student misses more than 15 minutes of a class, the student is marked absent.
- If a student falsifies the attendance record, the student receives an absence for the day in which the record was falsified and possible disciplinary action.
- If a student is texting, surfing the web, or sleeping during class, the student is marked absent.

Overall Absences

If a student misses 25% of the class (lecture and lab combined) regardless of excused/unexcused absence status, the result will be an F in the course. Therefore, no student may miss more than 11 classes.

Absence Penalties

On the 4th absence (excused or unexcused), students will be penalized by having 5% deducted from their final course average. On the 5th absence, 10% is deducted from their final course average. On the 6th absence, 15% is deducted from their final course average and so on. An absence is an absence.

Make Up Work

No late work is acceptable. Deadlines for coursework are posted in advance, and it is the responsibility of each student to complete his/her work and submit it either early or on time. The University recognizes three types of documented excuses that **may** permit a student to make up work: 1) University Sponsored Event, 2) unavoidable emergency, and 3) personal illness. Acceptable documentation includes: doctor/medical paperwork, written acknowledgement of participation in a university sponsored event, notification disseminated from the Judicial Office, and family emergency records. Acceptable documentation of an absence to make up coursework must be turned into the professor **within one week of returning to class. No exceptions will be made.**

Governing Policies

The following policies will apply toward decorum in online posts.

1. **ACCEPTABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR:** Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed. *Unprofessional behavior includes but is not limited to talking while instructor/speaker is presenting, texting during presentations, sleeping during class, and using abusive, profane language/gestures.

2. Electronic devices:

- NO cell phones, ear buds, laptops, or the like should be seen during class lectures. If they are visible, the student will be asked to leave and receive an absence for the day. Texting, surfing the Internet, and listening to music during class is unprofessional, distracting to others, and will not be tolerated. During group work, laptops or tablets are permissible in class.

3. Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

Grade Distribution:

Grades will be determined by: Tests, Assignments, Group Project and Presentation, and Attendance.

COURSE POINTS: You may earn up to 1000 points total. Your chance to earn your grade ends when the semester ends. No grades will be *bumped* up at the end of the semester regardless of how *borderline* the grade is perceived to be. There are no opportunities for extra credit outside of that which is offered to every student enrolled in the course. To calculate your grade at any time in the course, add up your earned course points and divide them by the possible course points at that point in the semester. That gives you an average. The following indicates which letter grades correspond to earned points:

1000 – 900 points	A	699 – 600 points	D
899 – 800 points	B	599 and less	F
799 – 700 points	C		

Tests:

Test 1 – Chapters 1-4, lectures and additional readings	<u>150 points</u>
Test 2 – Chapters 5-8, lectures and additional readings	<u>150 points</u>
Test 3 – Chapters 9-12, presenting in small groups, and lectures	<u>150 points</u>
	<u>TOTAL: 450 points</u>

Group Project and Presentation (Service Learning):

Project Proposal Packet	<u>50 points</u>
Progress Presentation (including PowerPoint)	<u>25 points</u>
Group Communication Skills Articles	<u>25 points</u>
Project Presentation (including PowerPoint)	<u>200 points</u>
Project Packet	<u>100 points</u>
Group Participation Grade & Assessment	<u>50 points</u>
Service Learning Hours and Reflection paper	<u>100 points</u>
	<u>TOTAL: 550 points</u>

An overview of the project follows:

- **Project Description:** Small groups will be engaging in a service learning project, in which they gain access and permission to work with a local or campus non-profit organization. Research about the organization's group communication will be conducted and interpreted to identify how a skills training could be designed to meet the group communication needs of the organization.
 - Research will be conducted about the organization's functioning, communication, coworker/volunteer relations, and use of small groups such as departments, work teams, committees, etc...
 - The project is a multi-part project with grades stemming from the proposal packet, progress presentation, group communication skills articles, project presentation, project packet, group participation, and service learning hours with reflection paper.
- The **group project proposal packet** must contain (all typed and worth 50 points):
 - Signed permission letter granting the group access to the organization
 - Proposed set of interview questions
 - Proposed use of questionnaires/instruments
 - Project proposal explaining the organization, why the organization was selected, the goals of the group, and the timeline for accomplishing the project.
 - APA reference page with research used to gain information about the organization (i.e. the organization's website).
- **Progress Presentation** (worth 25 points)
 - Use of PowerPoint slides
 - Participation of all group members
 - Introduction to the organization
 - Explanation of goals accomplished so far and goals to be accomplished (when and how)
- **Group Communication Skills Articles** (worth 25 points)
 - **Individuals** must find 2 articles about group communication (i.e. leadership, meeting management, group participation, problem solving, etc...) to summarize and link.
 - Article 1: academic journal from either the field of communication or management.
 - Article 2: a popular press article from sources such as the NY Times, Wallstreet Journal or Harvard Business Review.
 - These articles will become a database for groups to use for the skills training.
- **Project Data Collection:** Groups must work diligently to:
 - interview 4-6 organizational members,
 - implement questionnaires/instruments to as many organizational members as possible
 - conduct participant observation to learn about the organizations functioning, communication, coworker, relations, and use of small groups such as departments, work teams, committees, etc...
- **Project Data Interpretation:** The end product of interviews, questionnaires, and participant observation should identify:
 - Group communication strengths
 - Group communication areas for improvement
 - These conclusions must be supported by data. Quotes should from interviews, field notes from meetings, and results from questionnaires/instruments should be used to support conclusions. Generate graphs of statistical data.
- **Project Skills Training:** After identifying challenges to small group functioning, the group should design a communication skills training/intervention for the organization that addresses the challenges directly. Effective trainings combine education, motivation, experiential learning, and constructive criticism over a period of time to develop effective patterns of communicative behavior. Use the articles in the database on D2L.

- **Project Presentation** (PowerPoint and oral presentation worth 200 points)
 - 20-30 minute group presentation
 - Use of PowerPoint
 - Introduction to organization, group goals
 - Explanation of data collection (how many interviews and how long, how many meetings, how many questionnaires returned, how many service hours total to the organization)
 - Interpretation of data with supportive quotes and statistics
 - Strengths of organization's group communication skills
 - Areas of improvement for the organization's group communication skills
 - Utilization of quotes from interviews, field notes from participant observation, statistics from questionnaires
 - Proposed group communication skills training to address specified areas of improvement
 - Clarity of skills needed
 - Support of skills from research (textbook and article database on D2L)
 - Creativity of skills training (educational and application components)
 - Group Conclusion
 - APA style reference slide
 - All group members should participate in the presentation. A question and answer period will follow.
 - Please invite representatives of the organizations selected for the group project to attend the presentation.
- **Project Packet** (all typed, submitted in a binder, use tabs to differentiate sections, and worth 100 points)
 - Cover page with group name and member's names
 - Table of contents
 - Permission letter
 - Project Written Report (5-7 pages double-spaced)
 - Introduction to organization
 - Group goals and timeline of data collection
 - Summation of interpretation of organization's group communication strengths and areas for improvement
 - Summation of skills training
 - Conclusion
 - APA style reference page
 - Copy of PowerPoint slides from the project presentation (print 3-4 slides per page)
 - Copies of finalized interview guides and questionnaires
 - Results of surveys (create a chart)
 - Typed copies of minutes from all group meetings
 - Copies of slides from progress presentation and grade form from the progress presentation
- The **Group Participation Grade and Assessment** is based on each group member's assessment of one another's contribution.
- **Service Learning Hours and Reflection Paper**
 - Signed confirmation from the organization that you volunteered 5-7 hours during the semester
 - Three-page paper describing how the service learning project
 - Helped you learn and apply group communication skills
 - Added value to the organization that you volunteered for and researched during the semester

Attendance: See the attendance policy. Attendance has a real affect on your course grade.

Course Calendar: Use the course calendar to see when daily readings, speeches, assignments, and exams are scheduled. Calendars are subject to change based on student learning progress and unforeseen occurrences. In the event the calendar changes, announcements will be posted on D2L.

Week	Date	Daily Discussion, Lectures, Readings, and/or Assignments
1		Introduction to Small Group Communication Discuss impact of antecedent features in personal group history.
		Discuss Meyers and Anderson chapter 1 to enhance understanding of the benefits of small groups and primary and secondary features of groups.
2		Planning semester service learning project. Communicating with group leaders to determine the best fit for groups. Organizing into groups. Decision making about group norms and roles.
		Learning how to record minutes for meetings, set agendas for meeting and enact group roles.
		Drafting permission letters for the small group to gain access to the organization and interview and survey organizational members.
3		Drafting interview questions to use in the semi-structured interviews. Drafting survey instruments.
		Discussing Meyers and Anderson chapter 2 to enhance understanding of group socialization processes
		Discussing how small groups may use socialization principles to improve organizational goals
4		Discussing Meyers and Anderson chapter 3 to enhance understanding of how a student's personality and communication traits/styles impact group processes and outcomes; Applying principles by taking communication apprehension, willingness to listen, and argumentativeness instruments
		Discussing Meyers and Anderson chapter 4 to enhance understanding of diversity in small groups and intercultural communication competencies
		Test 1: Exam
5		Applying group diversity to an in class activity
		Discussing Meyers and Anderson chapter 5 to better understand models and stages of small group communication
		Small Group signed permission letters, interview questions and instruments, and project proposal

		due to instructor in the group project proposal packet.
6		Discussing Meyers and Anderson chapter 5 and 6 to enhance understanding of small group tasks; Improving decision making through application activities with brainstorming, ideawriting, Nominal Group Technique, and thinking hats
		Initial Presentations on Group Project Progress
		Small Group Exercise
7		See reading on D2L: Small Group As a System
		Explaining how to complete article summaries and synthesize with course content
		Articles and summaries due on D2L
8		Discuss Meyers and Anderson chapter 8.
		Consulting with Instructor in a professional context to communicate progress toward semester project group goals
		Test 2: Exam
9		Discussing Meyers and Anderson chapter 9 to enhance understanding of group leadership as a formal role and from a communicative perspective; Developing leadership competencies
		Discussing Juries as Decision Making Groups based on the Sun Wolf reading located on D2L; Considering how decisional regret theory applies to juries and other decision making contexts
		Applying principles of group leadership by engaging a in a reflective thinking writing exercise that examines personal leadership styles and shared leadership across group experiences
10		Discussing Meyers and Anderson chapter 10 to enhance understanding of relational communication in group contexts
		Discussing Meyers and Anderson chapter 11 to enhance understanding of conflict and how to effectively manage conflict interactions
		Applying principles of conflict management to determine the conflict management styles of group members and discuss how styles have impacted the group's interaction
11		Discussing Meyers and Anderson chapter 12 to determine how to increase group cohesion, establish supportive communication climates, and avoid defensive communication climates
		Discussing Meyers and Anderson Appendix B Small Group Presentations and how to apply these principles to pending semester project presentations.
12		Consulting with Instructor in a professional context to

		finalize group service learning project and presentation
		Finalizing group project packet; rehearsing for group presentation
13		Group Project Packet and Presentations (Communication, Critical Thinking, Teamwork, Social Responsibility)
		Group Project Packet and Presentations
		Group Project Packet and Presentations
14		Group Project Packet and Presentations
		Group Project Packet and Presentations
		Applying principles of constructive criticism in groups
15		Service Learning Hours and Reflection Paper Due
16		Reflecting on lessons learned
		Reflecting on lessons learned

- Last Day to Register:
- Twelfth Class Day:
- Mid-semester:
- Last Day to Drop or Withdraw without WP or WF:
- Last Day to Withdraw from the University:
- Dead Week:
- Finals Week: