

Group Discussion

Communication Studies 331 (COMM 331) 3 Units

*Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30-2:50pm

Instructor: Prince K. White, Ph.D.

Classroom: CRC MAIN BS 126

Office Phone: TBA

Office hours: TBA and by appointment M-F

E-mail Addresses:

prince.k.white@gmail.com

whitep@scc.losrios.edu

*Final Exam is Thursday, December 18 12:45-2:45 pm

Required Text:

In Mixed Company: Communicating in Small Groups & Teams 8th edition by J.

D.Rothwell (the instructor provides all additional readings or speeches via D2L).

Class website: princewhite.com/comm331

The title “group discussion” may conjure up interesting images in the minds of anticipating or potential students. The course *group discussion* is sometimes known by names like group communication, small group communication, if certain topics are covered in it may be called organizational communication. Group discussion is class that many people take during their college career. Some people take this class to fulfill a public speaking requirement; some people take this class as a requirement for their major. Whatever, the reason for taking this class, you are bound to learn lot about communication and build skills for participating in different types of groups. Because this class fulfills the IGETC 1C requirement there is a minimum amount of speaking required from each student and this necessarily constricts the number of students we can have in the class and how class time is spent. Group discussion, like public speaking, is designed to equip you with both knowledge and practical skills.

I like to make the analogy that taking a group communication class like taking an advanced language grammar class. Groups are something that we experience from a young age. However, few people understand the theory behind group dynamics and understand the subtle nuances from the perspective of a well-versed student of communication. The idea behind taking a group communication class and building group communication skills is that you will learn a lot about something that you are already very familiar with. We will be taking a fresh look at something you encounter everyday. To be successful in this class you need to:

1. Use your textbook regularly.
2. Visit and utilize the class website (D2L).

3. Participate in class discussion (that includes coming equipped with the requisite knowledge for that discussion).
4. Meet deadlines.
5. Be respectful to classmates.
6. Request help when needed and ask questions.

Below you will find the common elements of a syllabus with a tentative schedule that may change depending on the characteristics of the class.

From the college catalog:

Prerequisite: None. *Advisory:* ENGWR 51 *General Education:* AA/AS Area II(b); CSU Area A1; IGETC Area 1C, *Course Transferable to UC/CSU, See UC Limitations & Counselor, Hours:* 54 hours LEC

Description: This course is designed to increase students understanding of group communication and to prepare students to function more effectively in various types of groups, as college students, employees, as members in the community. The course is designed to assist students in developing an understanding of how group communication is uniquely different from other communication. Oral communication techniques within group settings will be analyzed in depth and assignments will include oral presentations (individual and group). The course will enhance student's effectiveness in the small group dynamics of roles, functions, leadership and norms. Problem-solving and decision-making skills are emphasized through simulations and discussion. Group projects may require students to meet outside of class time for service learning or campus activities. Videotaping equipment may be used as an aid to the student's self-analysis and improvement. Access to a computer with online capabilities may be required and computer access is available on campus. (C-ID COMM 140)

Schedule: **Full Term, Aug 23-Dec 18**

Student Learning Objectives:

- Design and relate messages clearly for effective and appropriate oral communication.
- Apply effective listening skills to comprehend spoken messages, analyze information critically and consider multiple perspectives.
- Compose ideas clearly in effective, appropriate and well-organized written messages.
- Analyze and formulate critical thinking within evidence and reasoning of spoken and written messages.
- Assess individual responsibility within one's ability to influence ethical, effective and appropriate communication among diverse settings and people.
- Define and identify various theoretical perspectives across the discipline of group communication studies.

COURSE POLICIES:

The course policies were created in the hopes of providing a classroom environment where every student can learn and I, as the professor, can spend as much time and energy on

teaching as possible. We will spend a significant amount of time discussing controversial topics and the course policies are designed to best facilitate class discussion and foster a productive, open, and welcoming environment.

Assignments: Assignments are due before the beginning of class on the date assigned and are to be submitted electronically via D2L (unless stated otherwise). Any assignment turned in after this time is LATE. For each weekday an assignment is late, it will drop one letter grade. For example, if an assignment would have earned an A- had it been turned in on time on Monday, it would receive a B- if you turn it in on Tuesday (one day late), and a C- if you turn it in on Wednesday (two days late). After three days you can a maximum of 60 percent of the total available points for a late assignment. NOTE: Computer or printer problems DO NOT constitute an excuse for late or incomplete work.

If an extenuating circumstance (emergency or illness) arises which causes you to miss a lot of class and/or assignments, it is your responsibility to notify me early on of the problem so we can discuss options. Assignments will not be accepted via e-mail.

Attendance:

Please attend every class session. Your participation in this class is a vital component to the success of our meetings. In addition, your involvement in classroom discussions is also important to the other members of this section.

If you do miss class, it is YOUR responsibility to make arrangements for making up what you have missed, including getting notes from a classmate, finding out about assignments or schedule changes, etc... Emailing me asking what you missed or if you missed anything important is not acceptable.

Notifying me that you will not be in class does not mean the absence is excused. Excessive absences from class (which I define as two or more) will lower your class activities grade and therefore your final class grade.

Chronic Tardiness/Leaving Class Early: If you are chronically tardy, or always need to leave early then drop this course and take it when your schedule allows you to be here the duration of class time.

Plagiarizing/Cheating: There is zero tolerance for plagiarizing. If you are caught plagiarizing, I will personally seek the maximum punishment allowable by the department and the college. At the very least, anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating will fail the assignment at hand.

Laptop/note taking: Please do not use laptops for taking notes in class. I encourage you to bring your laptops to class because they may be useful for class activities but please do not have them open unless instructed to do so.

Cell phones: Students who are using cell phones to text or make calls during class will be asked to leave class for the day. On occasion using a smart phone during class will be acceptable.

Class discussions: An integral part of this class will be the discussions that take place about the reading material and news and media examples. Understand that we will be discussing controversial topics and perspectives and it is your job to approach our discussions in an informed and respectful manner. In small class I do not require you to raise your hand to ask question or make a contribution to the class but please be aware of each person's desire to be heard and contribute.

Grade Appeal: If you wish to contest a grade I will accept a written argument detailing the injustice. The appeal will be due one week from the day the assignment was returned to you. Turning in an appeal does not guarantee that you will receive a higher grade.

Completion of Speeches, Class Projects and Tests: You must complete ALL of the speeches and group projects and both the midterm and the final. A zero or missing grade for these types of assignments will result in a maximum class grade of a "C" and it will be very hard to pass the class.

Grading Scale:

Midterm	150 points	15%
Final	150 points	15%
Media Paper	150 points	15%
Group Projects (at least 3 totaling 30%)	350 points	35%
<u>Class Activities</u>	<u>200 points</u>	<u>20%</u>
Total	1000 points	100%

A= 100-90

B= 89-80

C= 79-70

D= 69-60

F= >59

Assignment Descriptions:

Exams: There will be two exams based on the readings, lectures and class activities. Exams may take varying forms but will generally include identifications (IDs), essays, short essays and possibly oral responses.

Media Paper: The course will include a 2-3 page paper. The final paper will require you to complete a short half-page proposal, an outline, and an annotated bibliography. These three components of the paper are due at different points throughout the semester.

Group Projects: Early in the semester you will be assigned to a group that will last the duration of the course. You all will be responsible for three different group projects that

will vary in scope and character and depend on the interests and abilities of the students enrolled in the class.

Class Activities: Activity points will be distributed at nearly every class session. You will not be able to make up Class Activity points with extra credit.

Below is the tentative schedule. The schedule will change based on the number of students enrolled (updated schedules will be provided when enrollment is stable).

Week /Date	General Topic	Textbook	Projects/deadlines
1. 8/26, 8/28	Introduction/Comm theory	Ch. 1	
2. 9/2, 9/4	Groups as Systems/Cultural Theory	Ch. 2	
3. 9/9, 9/11	Group Development	Ch. 3	
4. 9/16, 9/18	Group Climate	Ch. 4	Group Project 1
5. 9/23, 9/25	Groups in practice (Skills)		
6. 9/30, 10/2	Projects/Roles and Leadership	Ch. 5	
7. 10/7, 10/9	Effective Teams	Ch. 6	
8. 10/14, 10/16	Midterm		
9. 10/21, 10/23	Defective Groups Decision making	Ch. 7	Media Paper Annotated Bibliography
10. 10/28, 10/30	Effective Groups Decision making	Ch. 8	Group Project 2
11. 11/4, 11/6	Power in Groups	Ch. 9	
12. 11/11, 11/13	Groups in practice (Skills)		
13. 11/18, 11/20	Conflict Management	Ch. 10	Media Paper Outline
14. 11/25, 11/27	Technology and Virtual Groups	Ch. 11	
15. 12/2, 12/4	Projects and Conclusion		Media Papers Due
16. 12/9, 12/11			Group Project 3
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