

# Comm 5: Spring 2018

## Group Discussion and Problem-Solving

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**Office Hours:** Mon/Wed, 12:00 noon to 12:30 p.m. **and**  
Tue/Thur, 1:30 to 2:00 p.m and 2:30 to 3:00 p.m. in 686T Analy Temps  
or by appointment

## Course Description

Experiential study of small-group discussion, including problem solving, conflict resolution, group roles, leadership styles, interest-based negotiating, group-meeting protocols, organizational communication, and cultural diversity.

## Textbook & Readings

Rothwell, J. Dan. *In Mixed Company. Communicating in Small Groups and Teams*.  
Cengage Learning, 2016. (9th edition)

Library Reserve Call Number: HM736 .R678 2016

Bring the call number along with your SRJC Student ID card to the Library Reserve desk when you are ready to check out material. Additional readings and links to web resources may be provided during semester.

## Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Employ a systematic method within a group to solve a problem.
2. Communicate effectively within groups.
3. Observe and explain effective group processes.

## Course Objectives (link to [Course Outline of Record](#))

1. Describe, compare, and analyze a variety of **small-group communication behaviors**.
2. Choose and practice methods for communicating with other members of a small group.
3. Describe, compare and analyze some **culturally-based differences** in cognitive styles and world-views of group members.
4. Describe and practice **supportive communication** behaviors.
5. Discuss and practice **listening skills** related to small-group communication.
6. Discuss and practice communication skills related to leadership and **decision-making**.
7. Demonstrate an appreciation for the **sociological and behavioral differences** between people, various cultures, personality types and learning styles.
8. Strategize and practice **problem-solving methods** for individual and group.
9. Discuss and practice both **task and maintenance roles** and behaviors.

10. Discuss and practice methods of group **consensus building**, rather than less inclusive means of decision-making, such as majority vote or trading.
11. Define, discuss, identify and **avoid groupthink**.
12. Create a **meeting agenda** to lead a group meeting utilizing Parliamentary Procedure.
13. Observe and explain concepts of organizational communication; organizational culture.
14. Explain and practice **methods of effective leadership** in a variety of situations.

## Grading & Graded Assignments

Specific guidelines and grading criteria for each assignment will be provided in class as we go along. Assignments are weighted as follows:

- 15% Group Presentation
- 15% Group Problem-Solving Project
- 15% Group Meeting Facilitation Project
- 10% Group discussion-working meetings
- 10% Group exercises, games & simulations
- 10% Group process evaluations
- 10% Journal (weekly entries—200 to 300 words—during Weeks 3-16)
- 10% Midterm Exam
- 5% Final Exam

- A = > 90%;
- B = 80 - 90%;
- C = 70 - 80%;
- D = 60 - 70%;
- F = < 60%

**Late work:** Written assignments will be accepted up to one week after the due date. Being late with oral assignments disrupts the course for your classmates and is not permitted. Missing an oral assignment will result in a grade of 0-zero for the absent student. The rest of the group is expected to perform without the missing member.

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. Missed classes cannot be made up. College policy 8.1.5 stipulates that students missing more than 10% of total class hours are subject to being dropped from the class. For this class, 10% = 280 minutes. If you need to miss more than one class in a row, contact instructor ahead of time to avoid being dropped.

## Course Schedule

The semester will be divided roughly in thirds:

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Weeks 2 - 6</b>   | <b>Basic concepts about communicating in groups</b> |
| <b>Weeks 7 - 11</b>  | <b>Problem-solving in groups</b>                    |
| <b>Weeks 12 - 17</b> | <b>Facilitating group decision-making meetings</b>  |

An updated schedule will be provided once class enrollment stabilizes and students form into your separate working groups.

The midterm exam will be scheduled at the end of the Basic Concepts portion of the course, approximately the 6th week.

## Cell Phone Activity in Classroom

This section focuses on face-to-face, real-time oral communication. More than simply speaking, communication entails listening, attention to body language and nonverbal messages, and awareness of group energy and dynamics. Cell phones offer effective tools, but cell phone activity unrelated to course exercises and group needs interferes with the focus of this course. Please limit use of your cell phone inside classroom. In general . . .

**Sound Off ✧ Vibrate Off ✧ Signal Off   Out of Reach ✧ Out of Sight ✧ Out of Mind**

## Expectations

This section emphasizes experiential learning of face-to-face, real-time group communication. Participation is essential. Therefore, students are expected to

- Attend every class meeting.
- Be "present" (awake, alert and engaged) during class.
- Be open to communicating with the instructor.

Electronic messages are useful for sharing information. Face-to-face communication tends to work better when discussing personal concerns. Students are invited to speak informally with the instructor after class as needed and/or to schedule appointments during office hours for private or sensitive matters. If you have a concern that you are uncomfortable talking about with me directly, contact our Department Chair at 527-4238.

## Academic Honesty & Student Conduct

Honesty and integrity are encouraged in this course and among the relationships that develop in this classroom. To paraphrase author and radio host Caroline Casey in her interpretation of philosopher George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff:

*Knowledge tends to degrade from one generation to the next, especially when we take on somebody else's original work without doing our own. A Tibetan saying goes, "Knowledge must be burned, hammered, and beaten like gold. Then, one can wear it like an ornament." When we passively, hence uncritically, receive teaching of any kind, our learning is degraded and our grade is merely fool's gold.*

College Policy 3.11 states: "Academic dishonesty is regarded as any act of deception, benign or malicious in nature, in the completion of any academic exercise. Examples of academic dishonesty include cheating, plagiarism, collusion or other academic misconduct." The Center for Academic Integrity offers a list of definitions and examples. Please be familiar with these definitions ([Academic Honesty Definitions](#)).

All students are expected to know the [Student Conduct Code](#) and adhere to it in this class.

## Disability Accommodations and Student Health

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** If you need disability-related accommodations for this class, such as a note taker, test taking services, special furniture, etc., please provide the Authorization for Academic Accommodations (AAA letter) from the

Disability Resources Department (DRD) to the instructor as soon as possible. You may also speak with the instructor privately during office hours about your accommodations. If you have not received authorization from DRD, it is recommended that you contact them directly. DRD is located in Bertolini (3rd Floor, Room 4842) on the Santa Rosa campus, and Jacobs Hall (Room 101) on the Petaluma Campus.

**Health & Learning:** Health issues (physical and mental) can interfere with academic success. Student Health Services is here to support you. Details are available at [shs.santarosa.edu](https://shs.santarosa.edu).

## Emergency Plan

**Emergency Evacuation Plan:** In the event of an emergency during class that requires evacuation of the building, please leave the class immediately and calmly. To make sure everyone got out of the building safely and to receive further instructions, our class will meet at the following location:

▶ ***In the north lot outside the classroom building***

If you are a student with a disability who may need assistance in an evacuation, please see instructor during office hours as soon as possible to discuss an evacuation plan.

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