

Comm 5: Group Communication

Fall 2019, Section 1562

Instructor: Cassandra Shafer
Email: cshafer@santarosa.edu
Phone: 527-4999 x9128 (voicemail); 527-4238 (Department)
Office(s): 2714 Maggini classroom (and 2820 Maggini for private appointments)
Office Hours: Mon/Wed, 10:00 to 10:30 a.m. **and** 1:30 to 2:00 p.m.
or by appointment

Catalog 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.

Instructor's Course Description

This course emphasizes **collaborative process**, *the sharing of power and responsibility in groups*. You are not competing against other students or groups. My task is to assist each student with listening, being heard, and accomplishing goals in a group setting. Your task is to develop your voice as a tool of collaboration, listen to the voices of others, and collectively self-manage time, task, talk, trust and tension. It is likely you will learn more from your classmates than from your instructor or textbook, and even more likely that your instructor will learn more from you than vice versa.

Textbook & Readings

Adams, Katherine L. and Gloria J. Galanes. *Communicating in Groups. Applications and Skills*. McGraw Hill, 2017. (10th edition)

Library Reserve Call Number: HM736 .G33 2018

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 will 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 and create a desired outcome.**
2. **Communicate effectively within groups.**
3. **Observe and explain effective group processes.**

Topics & Scope (link to [Course Topics](#))

communication basics

- active listening, elements of listening, types of listening
- barriers to listening (rehearsing, assumptions, interruptions, distractions, system overload)
- nonverbal messages and social sensitivity
- supportive and defensive communication
- confirming and disconfirming messages; constructive feedback

collaboration

- collective intelligence
- working together *with* difference and diversity
- invitational theory; creating conditions of safety, openness, freedom and value
- sharing power and responsibility

diversity

- cross-cultural (7 dimensions)
- gender (as continuum; gendered communication: feminine/masculine styles)
- individual differences (genetic; cognitive; personality types; temperament)
- primary and secondary dimensions (wheel of diversity)
- developmental stages (for individuals and for cultures; integral theory)

group basics

- definition of a small group (4 features)
- group development (stages theory; mid-point theory)
- types of tension (social, task and power)
- synergy and ripple effect
- understanding an individual's place in the group
 - interdependence as the goal
 - independence; dependence; co-dependence
- communication climate/emotional climate (4 conditions)
- balancing cohesiveness and productivity
- pitfalls: social loafing, task slacking, meta-talk, groupthink
- rules, agreements and norms
- self-managing groups (4 T's: manage time, manage task, manage talk, manage trust)
- elements of creating the container (physical, social-emotional, informational)

group productivity

- roles and functions (formal and informal)
- informal roles/functions (task, maintenance, dysfunctionally self-centered)
- formal roles/functions (facilitating inquiry, time-keeping, recording, process monitoring)
- group discussion tools (agendas, minutes/meeting notes, W-3 next steps, Δ + evaluations)
- meetings (participating in; running; archiving group memory)
- methods (see systematic models below)
- creative thinking (brainstorming, visioning, imagination exercises)
- critical thinking (avoiding groupthink, cognitive biases)

group influence

- leadership: theories, styles, dimensions, substitutes
- types of leadership: designated; emergent; functional-situational; leader v. manager
- leadership dimensions 12 C's; (individual as leader, group as leader); leadership profiles
- decision-making: types (authority, voting, consensus, dynamic gov); when to use which
- power: sources; modes (power over, power with, power to, power-from-within)
- conflict management; expectancy violation theory; conflict as window to unmet needs
- conflict styles (competition, avoidance, accommodation, compromise, collaboration)

Topics & Scope (*continued*)

systematic models (creating solutions & developing proposals; problem-solving)

- Reflective Method

- Procedural Model of Problem Solving

- Appreciative Inquiry (discover, dream, design, destiny-do it)

- Blended Model

 - analyze issue completely

 - identify values, discover positive elements, best practices already in existence

 - envision desired future outcome (creative thinking tools)

 - areas of freedom; identify constraints

 - identify criteria by which to evaluate eventual proposal

 - generate 101 solutions (incorporate multiple perspectives)

 - analyze solutions by criteria and values

 - prioritize, filter, and synthesize viable solutions into proposal

 - harvest objections, refine proposal

 - develop implementation plan

 - self-assess and self-evaluate group process and outcome

organizational communication

- organization as a group of groups

- organizational culture

- dynamic governance; double-linked groups; “safe enough to try/good enough for now”

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.

Participation & Attendance

This section emphasizes experiential learning of group communication through real-time, face-to-face interactions, group discussions, and class activities. 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 and classmates.
- Meet with your small groups outside of class, 1 to 2 hours per week.

Attendance: Attendance at every class is required. Credit for missed class activities 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. Class meetings last 80 minutes, running from 10:30 to 11:50 a.m

Missing two classes in a row will result in your being dropped. If you need to miss more than one class in a row, **consult** with instructor **ahead of time** to avoid being dropped and to understand consequences of missed activities.

Late work: Written assignments will be accepted up to one week after the due date, but will be subject to a 10% drop in credit.

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. Missing oral evaluations of your own and other groups will also result in a grade of 0-zero.

Grading

Students begin the semester at 80%. Due to the complex, dynamic nature of groups, an individual student does not necessarily have influence over the commitment of other students. To provide a "safety net" in grading, students are guaranteed an 80% if you attend all classes and complete all assignments, regardless of the performance of other group members on specific assignments.

Assignments are weighted "High Steps" (10%) and "Low Steps" (5%). See list of Assignments below. Assignments are assessed as follows:

- | | |
|---|--|
| + | process <i>and</i> product demonstrate collaboration and group best practices (raises semester grade a step) |
| ✓ | satisfies guidelines (maintains semester grade at same level) |
| △ | area for growth and improvement (grade pending future performance) |
| 0 | assignment not attempted (drops semester grade 3 steps) |

Students begin the semester at the level of B minus (80%). It requires "plus" grades on 3 "High Steps" or 6 "Low Steps" assignments to raise your semester grade a full letter (i.e., B to A). If a "△" grade is not resolved, it will lower your semester grade one step. **A "Zero 0" grade**, as its shape suggests, opens a black hole in the Holistic Learning Universe, potentially sucking the student into oblivion. More concretely, **not attempting an assignment lowers semester grade by 3 steps.**

Class Participation: This course emphasizes experiential learning of collaborative communication through face-to-face interaction, group discussions and class activities. ***Missing class lowers your grade 2% per absence up to 10%.*** After 3 absences, the instructor will invite you to schedule an individual conference to discuss your goals in taking an experiential communication course.

Course Assignments

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

10% Experiential Learning Activities

Games and group simulation exercises

10% Participant-Observer Group Log (*Individual assignment, not group grade*)

Weekly observation notes, analysis & reflections on group interactions

20% Group Projects:

5% Creative Collaboration: Small Group Identity

10% Systematic Method for Creating Solutions in a Small Group

5% Dynamic Governance among Small Groups

15% Group Presentations:

5% Oral: Group Identity as Visual Symbol (Name, Logo, Motto) - large group setting

5% Oral: Creating Solutions/Problem-Solving Proposal - small group setting

5% Written: Creating Solutions/Problem-Solving Proposal with Implementation Plan

20% Group Meetings:

10% Formal meeting protocol (with written agendas and minutes)

5% Informal working discussions (with records of meeting notes)

5% Double-linked group meetings

10% Evaluation of Groups in Action:

5% Written Reflection/Self-Evaluation as a group participant (*individual grade*)

5% Written and Oral Analysis and Evaluation of classmates' group process

15% Tests:

5% Midterm (will emphasize group roles and functions)

10% Final Exam (will emphasize dynamic governance, distributive leadership)

Cell Phone Activity in Classroom

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

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 needs interferes with the focus of this course. Use of your cell phone for personal reasons during class will result in a referral to Student Psychological Services for addiction counseling.

Expectations

The Communication Studies Department does not require, **but does recommend** that students take Comm 1: Introduction to Public Speaking, as well as English 1A and LIR 10 *before* enrolling in Comm 5. Students are expected to demonstrate college-level standards of writing, presentational speaking, and library research skills in completing assignments.

Challenging ourselves: Students are encouraged to take risks and challenge both yourself and others to learn and grow. Risks may be creative, intellectual, emotional or social-interactive, but must always be ethical. The following explanations are by no means exhaustive, and students are encouraged to think outside the box and/or stretch beyond your comfort zones.

- **Creative risks** could involve multi-sensory, multicultural, or multiple intelligences approaches to group activities; considering multiple perspectives in research, proposal development, and implementation planning; or an innovative approach to a topic/issue.
- **Intellectual risks** could involve choosing cutting edge, controversial, or fringe issues and topics that challenge both student and classmates to consider new ideas, re-consider deeply held beliefs, or question our biases; or challenging the status quo; or playing devil's advocate on popular ideas; or calling attention to group think or confirmation bias.
- **Emotional risks** could involve making authentic connections with fellow group members; offering honest supportive feedback on group social behaviors, or being open and honest about personal values and vision.
- **Interactive risks** could involve proactively engaging with group-mates and classmates; inviting our participation in your group's creative collaborations, problem-solving methods, and dynamic governance processes.

This section emphasizes experiential learning of collaborative communication, the sharing of power and responsibility. Therefore, students are expected to

- Be ethical in group interactions and productivity.
- Attend every class meeting.
- Be "present" (awake, alert and engaged) during class and meetings outside class.
- Be open to communicating with classmates and the instructor.

Electronic messages are useful for sharing information. Face-to-face communication works better for personal concerns. Students are invited to speak informally with the instructor before or after class as needed and/or to schedule appointments for sensitive matters. If you have a concern about me, the instructor, that you are uncomfortable talking about with me directly, please read the textbook chapter on conflict resolution and see [Student Complaints & Grievances](#).

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." Please be familiar with these definitions ([Academic Honesty Definitions & Misconduct](#)).

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.

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:

▶ ***On the athletic field south of 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.