FALL 2014
SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION -- COMM 2333.B01
Blended Course
Thursdays 9:30 – 10:45
Island Hall 156

CONTACT INFORMATION
Instructor: Cheryl R. Spaniol
Office: Bay Hall 375
Phone: (361) 825-2179
E-mail: Cheryl.spaniol@tamucc.edu
Please only use if Blackboard is down
Office hours: Tuesdays 11:00 – 12:00  Wednesdays 2:00 – 3:00  Thursdays 11:00 – 12:00  Fridays 12:00 – 1:00 & 2:00 – 3:00 (Also by appointment)

COURSE OVERVIEW

Course Description. This course is designed to increase students’ understanding of group communication concepts and theories and to help prepare students to be competent members of a variety of different groups, including problem-solving, planning, and decision-making task groups. This course examines a variety of topics central to improving group communication skills including problem solving techniques, leadership, team building, and conflict resolution. Relevant theory and research are examined. Students will also have a variety of opportunities to work in groups and apply course concepts.

Student Learning Outcomes. At the conclusion of the semester, students will be able to:
- apply small group communication theories and research.
- demonstrate skills for participating in groups.
- describe the connection between communication and small-group functioning.
- explain how to overcome challenges that interfere with productive group functioning.
- understand the role of “real world” groups in society.
- evaluate small group communication processes and recommend changes.

Course Materials. Both of the following books are required for this course. Additional supplemental readings will be available through the blackboard site.

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Classroom Expectations.
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of
the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

As the instructor, I pledge to do my best to present course materials in an interesting and engaging manner, to actively listen to and consider the ideas of every student in the classroom, and to be fair in grading all assignments.

Students are expected to:

- arrive for class on time;
- complete assignments, formal and informal by the designated deadlines.
- actively listen, consider, and reflect on the ideas of everyone in the classroom.
- participate in class and small-group discussions by sharing ideas and encouraging others to share ideas.
- generate a respectful and safe class atmosphere.
- wait until class is finished before “packing up.”
- Turn phones on silent; not text unless it is an emergency
- use laptops only to take notes, not surf, IM, email, shop, facebook, etc.

Not following these policies will adversely affect the student’s participation grade in the course.

**Group Policy.** This course requires that students work in groups both during and outside of class. In taking this course, students are responsible for actively participating in their groups. This means attending meetings, sharing ideas, contributing to papers and projects, and working to manage differences. Working in a group can be challenging. Group members are expected to try to manage conflicts on their own; however, the instructor will always be available as a communication consultant as needed.

If a member of the group is not actively participating in the group, the group may choose to ‘fire’ that student. To do this, the group must document how they tried to resolve problems before firing the student and make a case for why the student was fired. DOCUMENT EVERYTHING! The fired student must then find another group who is willing to ‘hire’ him or her to receive credit for the assignment.

**Attendance.** Attendance is required for participation in this course. Work missed during excused absences (those due to extreme illness, a family emergency, a religious holiday, or an excused university activity) can be made up. It is up to students to provide documentation of excused absences to me prior to planned absences and within a week of unplanned absences to make arrangements for missed work. Work missed due to unexcused absences may not be able to be made up. Additionally, students are responsible for obtaining the information covered in class. Unexcused absences from scheduled group meetings will hurt the final grade.

Each student is allowed one absence throughout the term, regardless of the reason. Continued unexcused absences will result in a deduction of 1 percentage point per absence off the final grade. In case of an emergency, it is the student’s responsibility to inform me of the reason for missing class within a week of the absence.

Arriving after class has started and attendance has been taken means that you will be marked absent. It is important to arrive on time.
Late Work. All assignments are due by the designated due dates. Each calendar day that the assignment is late will generally result in a one-letter-grade reduction.

Communication. This course will rely on blackboard to communicate electronically with students outside of class. Students need to be sure to check regularly.

Exams. Five exams will be given in the course. Exam questions will come directly from the assigned textbook readings. Material on the exam will not necessarily be covered in class, so it is imperative that all students have access to the course textbook.

Media. Laptops and cell phones are encouraged in the classroom, as long as students are using them to discuss or find material related to this course.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work for the appropriate citation of sources, and for the respect of others’ academic endeavors. Academic misconduct will be monitored in this course. Plagiarism, turning in papers which are not one’s own, utilizing a previous paper, and collaborating on papers will not be tolerated and will result in the reduction of one’s grade and/or immediate failure in the course.

Notice to Students with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Academic Advising: The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

Grade Appeal Process.
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

Questions and Problems. If you have concerns about the class, please arrange to discuss them with me during my office hours or by appointment.
Assignment Requirements. Unless otherwise indicated, every written assignment must be typed. Assignments should be double spaced with one-inch margins and typed in Times New Roman 12 point font. More thorough descriptions of each assignment can be found under the Assignments link in Blackboard. Students are responsible for keeping track of assignments and grades.

Community Benefit Project. Students will complete a major project while working in a small group throughout the semester. The group will be required to solve a problem or accomplish a task that benefits the community in some way (WARNING: though the group can seek funding for the project, as long as you adhere to the no call list and other university guidelines in BB; however, the goal of the group project can not be simply to raise money). The group must actually do something for the non-profit organization. The process will involve meeting as a group both in and out of class. Each group will put together a written proposal, as well as a formal presentation of the group’s project and outcomes.

Group Process Analysis. Each student will reflect on, analyze, and evaluate the communication processes associated with their community benefit project. This will be documented throughout the semester in each student’s Online Journal entries. A formal analysis paper will then be typed and turned in for a grade.

Exams. Four exams will be given this semester. Exams will cover assigned readings. Exams will be composed of a combination of multiple choice and true/false questions. The exams are designed to test students’ knowledge and critical thinking skills as it relates to their understanding and application of course material.

Class Participation and Attendance. The success of this class depends on the active participation of its members during a wide variety of discussions and group activities inside and outside of class. Participation in these discussions and activities is an integral part of the learning process and is graded accordingly. Participation includes coming to class and/or group meetings prepared, making positive contributions, encouraging others to share their ideas, completing assigned tasks, and acknowledging, supporting and respecting views that are different from one’s own. Monopolizing conversations, disrespecting or criticizing others, and creating a discordant atmosphere are unacceptable participation techniques. Participation, like other assignments, requires effort. Minimal participation in assigned group or class, as well as excessive absences from assigned group or class (more than 1) earns a C or lower.

Grade Distribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Benefit Project</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Proposal (group paper)</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completion of Group Project</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Group Process Analysis Paper (individual paper)</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Point Group Process Analysis Paper (individual paper)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1000</td>
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There are 1000 points possible, broken down as follows:
A = 900-1000
B = 800-899
C = 700-799
D = 600-699
F = 500 or fewer
**COURSE EVALUATION**

**Evaluation.** Grades are based on demonstration of mastery of course material. Work that meets the minimum requirements of an assignment, is done on time, and displays average involvement with the course content is deserving of a ‘C.’ Higher grades are awarded to work that goes above and beyond the minimum standards to produce products that reflect superior intellectual effort, excellence in critical analysis, and overall creativity in the approach to any given assignment.

**To average your grade up to any given point in the semester…**
Add what you COULD have earned up to that point
Add what you have actually earned up to that point
Divide what you COULD have earned INTO what you actually earned you will have your current average in the course.

**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment**</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday August 28</td>
<td>Syllabus/Blackboard</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meet a Friend/Communication Anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday September 4</td>
<td>Chapter 1 Introduction to Group Communication</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday September 11</td>
<td>Chapter 2 Group Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday September 18</td>
<td>Chapter 3 Group Membership</td>
<td>Exam 1 – Chapters 1, 2 &amp; 3 go offline at midnight</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group Assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday September 25</td>
<td>Chapter 4 Group Diversity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday October 2</td>
<td>Chapter 5 Group Leadership</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday October 9</td>
<td>Chapter 6 Group Motivation</td>
<td>Exam 2 – Chapters 4, 5 &amp; 6 go offline at midnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday October 16</td>
<td>Chapter 7 Verbal and Nonverbal Communication in Groups</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday October 23</td>
<td>Chapter 8 Listening in Groups</td>
<td>Mid-point group analysis paper due in BB Messages at midnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Chapter/Activity</td>
<td>Exam/Deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday October 30</td>
<td>Chapter 9 Conflict and Cohesion in Groups</td>
<td>Exam 3 – Chapters 7, 8 &amp; 9 go offline at midnight</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deadline to complete group projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday November 6</td>
<td>Chapter 10 Structured and Creative Problem Solving in Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday November 13</td>
<td>Chapter 11 Critical Thinking and Argumentation in Groups</td>
<td>Group Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday November 20</td>
<td>Chapter 12 Planning and Conducting Meetings</td>
<td>Exam 4 Chapters 10, 11 &amp; 12 go offline at midnight</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday November 27</td>
<td><strong>HAPPY THANKSGIVING!</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday Dec 4 - 10 Final Exam</td>
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<td>Group Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Final Group Analysis papers due by midnight in BB Messages.</td>
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*This schedule is tentative. Adjustments are likely to occur over the course of the semester.**Due on the date scheduled.

**Blackboard:** Password protected web site that students use for communication as it relates to this course. In addition, students will gain access to all assignments, exams, the grade book and resource materials for the course.

**Gaining Access to Blackboard…**
Learning to use Blackboard will be vital to your success in this course. Within your Blackboard shell you will find:
1. Syllabus
2. Course Calendar
3. Assignments

In addition:
1. Blackboard is our primary mode of communication outside of the classroom setting. Please only use our outside email address if Blackboard is down.
2. All exams/quizzes will be taken in Blackboard
3. Grades will be posted at the end of the semester to check your records against our records.

Go to: [https://bb9.tamucc.edu/](https://bb9.tamucc.edu/)
You will see…
Username: 
Password:

Username is first initial and last name (plus # for some people)
Password is whatever you established
*Same as computer labs and wireless access, which is different from Islander Email

IT Help Desk (361)825-2825.
http://distance-education.tamu.edu/student_resources.html

Should see course as a blue link… click on it to enter COMM 2333 Small Group Communication