SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION –
COMM 2333.001
Spring 2016
MWF 11:00-11:50 am
OCNR 130

CONTACT INFORMATION
Instructor: Shad Tyra, MA
Office: Classroom East, Room 216 B
Phone: 825-2316 (Mitzi Gibson, Admin. Asst for Comm and Media)
E-mail: shad.tyra@tamucc.edu
Office hours: Monday & Wednesday 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Tuesday 2:00 –3:00 p.m. (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. The following book is required for this course. Additional supplemental readings will be available through the blackboard site.

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Classroom Expectations:

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 two absences 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.

**University Policies**

**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism.**
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in an “F” for the course and possible removal from the University.

**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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a
Dropping a Class
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. **Friday, April 8** is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Classroom/professional behavior
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.

Statement of Civility
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Grade Appeals*
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, [http://cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

Disabilities Accommodations*
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Statement of Academic Continuity
In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

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**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>
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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>
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<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**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment**</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W/F 01/20-22</td>
<td>Syllabus/Blackboard</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meet a Friend</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWF 01/25-29</td>
<td>Chapter 1 Introduction to Group Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWF 02/01-05</td>
<td>Chapter 2 Group Development</td>
<td>Group Assignments</td>
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<td>MWF 02/08-12</td>
<td>Chapter 3 Group Membership</td>
<td>Exam 1 – Chapters 1, 2 &amp; 3 Given Friday</td>
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<td>MWF 02/15-19</td>
<td>Chapter 4 Group Diversity</td>
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<td>MWF 02/22-26</td>
<td>Chapter 5 Group Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWF 02/29-03/04</td>
<td>Chapter 6 Verbal and Nonverbal Communication in Groups</td>
<td>Exam 2 – Chapters 4, 5 &amp; 6 Will be given on Friday</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWF 03/07-11</td>
<td>Chapter 7 Listening in Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWF 03/21-25</td>
<td>Chapter 8 Conflict and Cohesion in Groups</td>
<td>Mid-point group analysis paper due Friday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Exam/Work Item</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWF 03/28-04/01</td>
<td>Chapter 9 Structured and Creative Problem Solving in Groups</td>
<td><strong>Exam 3</strong> – Chapters 7, 8 &amp; 9 Will be given on Friday</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWF 04/08-08</td>
<td>Chapter 10 Critical Thinking and Argumentation in Groups</td>
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<td>MWF 04/11-15</td>
<td>Chapter 11 Planning and Conducting Meetings</td>
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<td>MWF 04/18-22</td>
<td>Chapter 12 Technology and Virtual Groups</td>
<td><strong>Exam 4</strong> Chapters 10, 11 &amp; 12 Will be given Friday</td>
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<td>Mon 04/25</td>
<td>Guest Speaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>W/F/M 04/27-05/02</td>
<td>Final work in Groups Last Day of classes</td>
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****FINAL EXAM DATE and TIME******

Friday, May 6, 11:00am-1:30pm- Group presentations on this day. Final written group analysis is due on this date at the beginning of class.

*This schedule is tentative. Adjustments are likely to occur over the course of the semester.
**Due on the date scheduled.