COMM 5314: Small Group Decision Making  
CRN 82537…Section 00…158 Island Hall…Tuesdays 7:00pm – 9:30pm

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Credit Hours: 3 / Semester: Spring 2019
Office Phone: (361) 825-2443
Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 12pm-2pm

TAMUCC Department of Communication and Media Mission Statement
“Our mission is to develop students who are effective and ethical communicators with the creative, critical, and collaborative skills necessary to succeed in a diverse global environment.”

Course Title and Description
Small Group Decision Making is a three credit course that focuses on the ways in which groups develop tasks, analyze problems, develop and evaluate solutions, and implement solutions. This course is intended as an overview of contemporary theory and research in small group decision making.

Course Objectives
The course is designed to expose students to the intricacies of small groups and the decisions that they make through the communication of members. This course is in partial fulfillment of the following Communication and Media Department outcomes. Specifically, students should be able to perform the following by the conclusion of the Spring 2019 semester:
- Define small group decision making.
- Create positions and clear arguments about small group decision making theory and research.
- Develop a workshop that incorporates contemporary theory about small group decision making with practical advice from popular press authors.
- Produce a consultation manual that effectively merges theory and research with small group decision making practice.

Required Texts


Required Additional Readings
- Reading material for selected topics from a variety of sources will be placed in the “Required Additional Readings” folder on Blackboard (See reference information for each source on pages 5-6 of this syllabus).

Attendance
Student attendance in class is essential to learning. Assignments and tests are expected to be delivered on the day assigned. Exceptions will be made only in extreme circumstances at the discretion of the instructor. When absences are due to a University activity, it is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor of these absences at least one (1) week in advance of the occurrence to allow adequate time for rescheduling. Definitions of excused and unexcused absences will reflect university guidelines. **Only formally documented, “university excused” absences will be allowed.**

*More than 1 unexcused absences will result in automatic failure of the course*
**Grading Procedure**

Grades will be based on the following point values:

- 315-350 points = A
- 280-314 points = B
- 245-279 points = C
- 210-244 points = D
- 0-243 points = E

**Grading**

Grades are comprised of classroom engagement activities, position papers, popular press mall group book application paper and discussion, and a small group consultation manual and session. There will be no opportunity to makeup in-class activities. The total amount of points possible for the course is 350. Assignments turned in late will receive a 10-percent deduction for every day it is late.

**Classroom Engagement Activities**

During various class periods, students will complete classroom engagement activities that will be used for direct application and discussion of course topics, discussion material, and reading content. There will be ten classroom engagement activities in this course, each worth 5 points, for a total of 50 points.

**Position Papers**

There will be three position papers in this course, each worth 25 points, for a total of 75 points. The purpose of Position papers is to encourage reflection, critical thinking, and argumentative skills. Position papers allow students to learn about an issue in the small group communication discipline, take a stand on the issue, and then effectively argue their viewpoint with relevant supporting evidence. Grading will be based upon the quality of information presented to defend one’s viewpoint. Further directions and rubric for the Position Papers will be distributed and discussed in class at the appropriate time.

**Popular Press Small Group Book Application Paper and Class Discussion**

Popular press (books written for a wide array of audiences) about teamwork, small groups, and small group decision making are numerous. Thus, they represent an opportunity to integrate academic insight and theory with applied prescriptions and advice about small group decision-making. Working individually, students will select a popular press teamwork, small group, or small group decision-making book published between 1990 and 2017 to read, write a paper about, and facilitate a discussion of in class. Papers should address foundational teachings of the book and how they relate to teamwork, small groups, and small group decision-making and research discussed in the course materials for the class. Discussions of the book in class should capture the attention of fellow students and provide them an opportunity to see the usefulness of connecting popular press literature with academic literature. Decisions about and approval for the book should be provided by February 9. Further directions and rubric for the Popular Press Small Group Book application paper and class discussion will be distributed and discussed in class at the appropriate time. It is worth 100 points.

**Small Group Consultation Manual and Session**

An important part of graduate education is to synthesize theory and research about a content area and apply that information into professional and personal spheres of life. Therefore, working with a small group, students will select an organization and prepare a manual that provides that organization insightful wisdom and tips that are grounded in small group communication theory and research about how they can maximize efficiency and effectiveness through effective small group decision making. The assignment will require the creation of content that contains sections devoted to such topics as an explanation of the organization, rationale for why small group communication skills are needed in that organization, and useful approaches for maximizing creativity and production in small groups. The Small Group Consultation Manual will be presented during class as a consultation session. The consultation session should focus on enlivened discussion about the usefulness of the manual and key knowledge claims from it. The group will receive one grade worth 125 points. Further directions and rubric for the Small Group Consultation Manual and Session will be distributed and discussed in class at the appropriate time.
**Academic Advising**

Students pursuing the Master of Arts in Communication will be paired with a graduate faculty member advisor in their first semester. Students should contact their advisors within the first two weeks of a semester to arrange a meeting during which degree plans, tracks, and opportunities for professional development should be discussed. If there is any question regarding whom a student’s academic advisor is, the student should contact Dr. Stephanie Rodriguez, Interim Graduate Coordinator, for assistance (stephanie.rodriguez@tamucc.edu; 361-825-5753). To finalize your degree plan and register for graduation, you must also meet with the Graduate Student Academic Advisor in the Academic Advising Center for the College of Liberal Arts. This office is located in Driftwood 203E and can be reached at (361) 825-3466.

**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 your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. 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.

**Disability Services**

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 CCH 116 and the phone number is 361-825-5816.

**Grade Appeal Process**

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

**Expectations of Graduate Students**

1. Ability to contribute engaging and thoughtful discussion points during class.
2. Demonstrated completion of all assigned reading material prior to class.
3. Proficiency in academic writing and use of APA Style.
4. Focus on learning instead of focus on grades.

**Student Conduct**

1. **Know the syllabus:** Be informed on what is to be read, discussed, and submitted for each class meeting.
2. **Respect:** Be courteous of the professor and fellow students and refrain from talking amongst yourselves during lecture and discussion. This also means that proper professional communication is also required.
3. **Preparation:** Attend class ready to contribute and interact with material presented in class.
4. **Punctuality:** Please make best effort to arrive to the classroom before class begins.
5. **Electronic Devices:** All devices that distract from the learning process are prohibited.
6. **Listening/Feedback:** Devote attention during class sessions and heed advice and constructive instruction on assignments provided throughout the semester.
7. **Effort:** This class will be fun and enlightening, yet challenging. Please put forth your best effort each day in the course.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tue Jan 15</td>
<td><em>Foundations of Small Group Communication:</em> Introducing Small Group Decision Making</td>
<td>Young et al. (2007), Ch. 1; Poole (1998)</td>
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<td>Tue Jan 29</td>
<td><em>Foundations of Small Group Communication:</em> Developing Small Groups</td>
<td>Anderson, Riddle, &amp; Martin (1999); Bonebright (2010)</td>
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<td>Tue Feb 05</td>
<td><em>Foundations of Small Group Communication:</em> A Systems Approach to Small Groups</td>
<td>Young et al. (2007), Ch. 2 &amp; 3</td>
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<td>Tue Feb 12</td>
<td><em>Group Member Characteristics:</em> Personality and Communication Traits</td>
<td>Young et al. (2007), Ch. 4; Keyton &amp; Frey (2002)</td>
<td><strong>Position Paper 2: Essential Characteristics of Group Members</strong></td>
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<td>Tue Feb 19</td>
<td><em>Group Member Characteristics:</em> Communication Competence</td>
<td>Spitzberg &amp; Cupach (2011); Hawkins &amp; Fillions (1999)</td>
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<td>Tue Feb 26</td>
<td><em>Features of Small Groups:</em> Small Group Leadership</td>
<td>Young et al. (2007), Ch. 5</td>
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<td>Tue Mar 05</td>
<td><em>Features of Small Groups:</em> Small Group Climate and Conflict Management</td>
<td>Young et al. (2007), Ch. 6; Gibb (1961); Evans &amp; Dion (1991)</td>
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<td>Tue Mar 12</td>
<td><strong>No Class: Spring Break</strong></td>
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<td>Tue Mar 19</td>
<td><em>Features of Small Groups:</em> Citizenship Behaviors</td>
<td>Burtis &amp; Turman (2006), Ch. 7; Podsakoff, Ahearn, &amp; MacKenzie (1997)</td>
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<td>Tue Mar 26</td>
<td><em>Features of Small Groups:</em> Destructive Member Behavior</td>
<td>Paulin &amp; Griffen (2015); Stohl &amp; Schell (1991)</td>
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<td>Tue Apr 02</td>
<td>Popular Press Book Workshop</td>
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<td><strong>Popular Press Book Paper and Workshop</strong></td>
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<td>Tue Apr 09</td>
<td>Popular Press Book Workshop</td>
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<td><strong>Popular Press Book Paper and Workshop</strong></td>
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<td>Tue Apr 16</td>
<td>Outcomes of Small Groups: Innovation and Creativity</td>
<td>Burningham &amp; West (1995); Paulus &amp; Brown (2003)</td>
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<td>Tue Apr 23</td>
<td>Outcomes of Small Groups: Unintended Outcomes</td>
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<td>Tue Apr 30</td>
<td>Small Group Consultation Session</td>
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<td><strong>Small Group Consultation Session</strong></td>
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<td>Tue May 07</td>
<td>Small Group Consultation Session</td>
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<td><strong>Small Group Consultation Session</strong></td>
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Reference Information for all Required Reading Material (Continued on Subsequent Pages)


