CMST230: Small Group Communication
Winter 2015
Online

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Office Hours: By appointment
Email: wanspach@bellevuecollege.edu; Canvas

Quick Links to Key Content:
- Required Reading
- Course Description & Learning Outcomes
- Course Format & Expectations
- Learning Assessment / Assignments
- Assignment Details
- Policies [Including Late Policies & Grade Appeals]

Required Reading


Please be sure to use the 14th edition! Additional readings will be available as PDFs on the Canvas site.

*Note: The assigned readings are critical to your understanding and appreciation of course concepts. I have tried to select a textbook that will provide concrete examples of issues related to our course learning goals. The reading will provide valuable background for issues we will address further in online lectures and assignments.*

Course Description & Learning Outcomes

Explores effective communication in small groups. Students examine aspects of group process, including leadership, conflict management, decision-making, conformity, and critical thinking. Students work in groups to test theories and practice skills. Fulfills social science course requirement at BC.

After completing this class, students should be able to:
1. Identify the language, listening, and nonverbal communication skills that are needed to promote a positive communication climate in a group setting.
2. Analyze the influence of culture on group interaction.
3. Identify the actions needed to conduct an effective meeting and promote group productivity.
4. Analyze the methods of decision making used by a group.
5. Evaluate how theoretical group problem solving models can be used to help a group accomplish a task.
6. Identify methods groups can use to stimulate critical and creative thinking while problem solving.
7. Evaluate how leadership theory can be used to help a group accomplish its goals.
8. Identify different methods for managing conflict within a group.
Course Format and Expectations

This area of study contains complex ideas and potentially difficult humanities jargon. I will do my best to assist you, but a college reading level and college writing level in English is needed to succeed in this course.

Expectations:

Your active participation in the learning process is expected and valued. We will address a variety of topics, many involving controversies that touch upon our personal values and beliefs. I encourage you to share your thoughts, concerns, and opinions in class—we will have a stimulating learning environment and a richer learning experience if we can discuss a wide range of perspectives. At the same time, the issues we will address can be highly emotional ones and we won’t always agree with one another. It is vital that everyone feels safe to air her or his ideas and opinions. Please be sensitive and respectful to other viewpoints when making comments and contributing to discussion.

Learning Assessment

In order to earn a passing grade in this course you will need to submit all of the assignments listed below and take all exams. Submission of all assignments and exams constitutes a necessary, but insufficient condition for passing the course. In other words, you need to submit all assignments and exams and need to earn 61% of the total possible points in order to pass the course. Incompletes will not be offered for this course.

Individually Graded Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Week Assignments</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Team Competition Analyses (100 pts; 100 pts)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Team Competitions (4 x 40)</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Board Assignments (10 x 40)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online [Canvas] Quizzes (3 x 50 points)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each Group Member Earns the Same Grade Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recorded Synchronous Team Meeting</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 1000

Grading Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-85</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>76-79</td>
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<td>70-72</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>66-69</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-65</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assignment Descriptions (More detail will be provided for each of these assignments on our Canvas site.)

Discussion Posts and Responses:

**Discussion Responses**

The majority of your class participation grade will come from my evaluation of your Discussion Posts & Responses. You are required to post at least two (2) substantive and well written responses to your peers’ discussion posts **each time a post is due**. Please see the course calendar for discussion post response deadlines.

For example, if you post twelve responses for the first round of discussion posts and zero responses after that you will only earn credit for **two responses**.

Given that there are **10** required discussion posts, you will need to submit a minimum total of **20** substantive and well written responses by the end of the quarter.

**Discussion Posts**

There are ten (10) required discussion posts this quarter. You will be provided with a topic and/or debatable claim to discuss for each of these required posts.

**Exemplary discussion posts** should meet the following requirements:

- A clearly stated thesis statement (or key argument)
- Evidence from relevant course materials (e.g., lecture content or the course texts) to support your argument. Remember: this assignment is how I assess your understanding of concepts and your ability to critically apply them in an analysis. If you simply dump concepts into your post and/or do not define them, I have no idea if you understand these terms.
- Accurate application of relevant course content.
- Few (if any) writing errors
- Links/URLs to any non-course related materials referenced within your posting

Here is an example of an ideal discussion board post:

“Through word and example, the family shapes a child’s personality and instills modes of thought and ways of acting that become habitual” (p. 54). To begin considering what defines my culture, I first look to the influence of my family, as family is “one of the most enduring and influential social organizations that deal with deep structure,” (p. 49) and it is “the basic unit of society and it is at the heart of its survival” (p. 53). My family demonstrated to me a contrasting view regarding **individualism** (p. 67). At a state level, my family is more **collectivist** (p. 67) than is the general culture.
I think this collectivist orientation was influenced by four family circumstances. My grandfather brought over a more collectivist view when he immigrated from England. His life’s work was to work to change labor laws to better protect the rights of workers. My grandmother grew up on a farm. Though farm life requires a tough, hard-working spirit, it also requires that many hands work together. She and my grandfather met while working on a political campaign and were active in politics their entire lives. My mother grew up in a religious household in which service to others was expected. Her life’s work has been as a social worker and she has regularly been involved with volunteer work in her free time. My father has worked as an environmentalist my entire life, trying to influence policy changes that better protect the planet.

Growing up in a family with this history, I have a worldview that change is possible, that we each have a voice and the freedom to use it, and that we have not only a right but a responsibility to support our community and our world. This worldview is supported by events in my culture’s history. The founders of this country sought to change their circumstances and to establish a country in which freedom and government by the people were core principles. Throughout our country’s history, people have worked for change and progress (p.80), and the people who have bravely pushed for change—people like Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Susan B. Anthony—have become national heroes.

On a personal level, my family is very individualist, “emphasiz[ing] independence and individual autonomy” (p. 68). Self-reliance, self-determination, and following one’s own pursuits is what is practiced and advocated. Family is not for support—you pick yourself up by your bootstraps and forge your way. Though my mother grew up as a church-goer, she is no longer and the rest of my family have never been. Reliance on a religion or a faith group contradicts their notion of personal strength. Living in a country in which freedom of religion—and freedom from religion—is part of our country’s history and character (p.79), this is possible. Cultural values that I have always treasured are the ideas of justice, fairness, and welcome. Though I know in practice this hasn’t been the case for many people in our country, I like the ideal that we are innocent until proven guilty, that our Declaration of Independence says that all men are created equal, and that we want “[the] tired, [the] poor, [the] huddled masses yearning to breathe free” (p.13) to come join us. History has shown time and time again that we don’t live up to that ideal—we aren’t living up to it even today—but I am thankful that I live in a country that at least considers those ideas and makes attempts to meet them.”

What constitutes a substantive response?

A substantive response is one that refers to a specific portion of the original discussion post and attempts to spark discussion about that portion. An example of an unsatisfactory post is: “I really like what you wrote about culture. Good job!” This post is unsatisfactory because it doesn’t attempt to spark a discussion about what the person wrote about culture. A better/satisfactory response post would be:

“There definitely were several historical events that shaped our country and I too believe that our desire for individualism was the cause. You picked a great quote from West
and Turner, “Individualism involves self-motivation, autonomy, and independent thinking”. Our nation’s definition of freedom seems to follow this way of thinking. The key words from that quote can be applied to the historical events that you listed. The settlers demonstrated self-motivation in their desire to practice the religion of their choosing. The abolition of slavery demonstrated the importance of autonomy. You also mentioned some of the groups that spawned from these monumental events. Despite the fact that I do not agree with what these groups stand for, I do understand that they are also practicing individualism.”

**Here Are Two Examples of What NOT to Do in Your Comments:**
“thnx 4 sharing. u r awesome.”

And/Or:
“I totally agree.”

Keep in mind that a student's original response to an online discussion question as well as their comments to colleagues will be evaluated.

**First Week Assignments (55 points):**

You will earn points toward your total class participation grade by completing the required First Week Quiz and participating in the first discussion post titled “10 Things about You”. The quiz contains multiple choice and true/false questions about the course website, plagiarism, and course assignments. For details about the first discussion assignment, please see the discussion board.

**Quizzes (3 X 50 Points):**

There will be three (3) quizzes given. Each quiz is worth 50 points and will consist of true/false and multiple-choice questions. Quiz material will pertain to information covered in the text, as well as, information discussed and presented in class discussions and assignments. Review sheets will be provided for each quiz. Review sheets can be accessed through the learning modules on the website.

**Team Competition**

There are two rounds of team competitions. I will assign students randomly into teams for the first round. Students will be able to express their preferences for teammates in the second round. The purpose of these competitions is to offer students the chance to apply all of the concepts, theories, and strategies we study throughout the quarter.

The winning teams will earn extra credit points. Do not worry about not winning! The remaining teams do not lose any points! Team members are graded solely on their active participation in the competitions. Each team member will be graded individually. This means that everyone who actively participates will earn full points – students who do not contribute to the team will earn zeroes for this portion of the class.
More details about these competitions and your individual analyses of your team’s communication is available on the Assignment page.

**General Policies**

**General Concerns:**
Should you have concerns about any aspect of the class, I encourage you to come to me with them. If for any reason you don’t feel comfortable raising your concerns with me, the usual next step would be to speak with the program chair (Katherine Oleson, koleson@bellevuecollege.edu). You can also refer concerns about this class to the Arts and Humanities Division Dean, Maggie Harada (maggie.harada@bellevuecollege.edu) or the Assistant Dean, Scott Bessho (scott.bessho@bellevuecollege.edu) in the Arts and Humanities division office (R230). An additional resource for concerns you find aren’t being addressed by faculty or administration is the Ombuds Office (http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/ombuds/default.html (Links to an external site.)).

**Grade Appeals:**

You have the opportunity to appeal any grade that you are given in this class. All grade appeals must be typed, and state your reason for appeal. If you so choose, I will accept appeals via e-mail. Grade appeals must be submitted no sooner than 24 hours after the grade has been issued. **I will not discuss any grade on the day the grade is administered.** Grade appeals must be made **within 10 days** of receiving the grade from me.

**Assignment Submission:**

For purposes of equity and fairness for all students, you will be given a reasonable amount of time to complete all written assignments. Deadlines for all assignments will be announced on the course website calendar and are listed in the syllabus. **All written assignments must be submitted via our Canvas site unless otherwise stated.**

Please note: You are responsible for ensuring that any assignment submitted as an attachment is capable of being opened (i.e., not a corrupted file). I will evaluate any corrupted files as being an incomplete assignment – in other words, you will earn a zero for that assignment.

In the event that you or your group does not turn in your assignment on the day/time it is due, you will be assessed the following academic penalty: late assignments will receive a one point grade reduction for every day they are late (i.e., B+ to C+). This means that students are not eligible to earn credit for assignments submitted more than five days late.

Students are responsible for contacting the instructor **immediately before or following** a missed deadline with a documented explanation (i.e., emergency) for not completing the assignment on-time.

**Late quizzes, group assignments, team competition activities, and final assignments will not be accepted.**
Statement on Academic Integrity:

You should know that plagiarism is a serious violation of your contract as a student and will be treated severely. It is important for you to understand that plagiarism is any representation of another person’s words or ideas in a manner that makes it seem as if they were your own, in either oral or written form. Obviously, this means that you may not copy another person’s papers.

*Students caught cheating on an exam or assignment will not receive any credit for that portion of the class and will be reported to the Dean of Student Programs.* For example, a group who plagiarizes a portion of their research report will earn a zero for that report and the group’s presentation of the report.

If you do not know what constitutes plagiarism, please check out this handy [game/guide](https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc/faculty.html).

Disability Resources: [Text taken from](https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc/faculty.html)

The Disability Resource Center serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. Please visit the DRC if you have any questions about classroom accommodations whether you are a student or a faculty member.

If you are a student who has a disability or a learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact the DRC staff as soon as possible.

The DRC office is located in B132 or you can call our reception desk at 425-564-2498. Deaf students can reach us by video phone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. Please visit our website for application information into our program and other helpful links at [www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc](http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc).

Remember if you are someone who has either an apparent or non-apparent disability and requires assistance in case of an emergency situation, such as a fire, earthquake, etc., please meet with your individual instructors to develop a safety plan within the first week of the quarter.

Classroom Conduct:

When engaged in your role as a student, please be constructive in your comments both in the classroom and online. Always treat your classmates with respect. Please consult with [www.bcc.ctc.edu/artshum/policy.html](http://www.bcc.ctc.edu/artshum/policy.html) to review the Arts and Humanities Division statement of Student Procedures and Expectations and/or contact your instructor should you have any questions or concerns.