

Speech 15-Fall 2009

Problem Solving and Critical Reasoning in Groups

Instructor: Matt Abrahams

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Advisory: Speech 1 or 10 and English Writing 1A or English as a Second Language 5.

4 units of credit

Course Description

Problem Solving and Critical Reasoning in Groups is a hands-on practical class that examines communication and reasoning in the context of effective group problem solving. In this class, we emphasize the application of group communication concepts and methods of problem solving to come up with effective, appropriate decisions. We will explore principles of evidence, reasoning, and impediments to effective group communication.

I believe that true learning only occurs when everyone is involved and interested in the material presented. Our class will consist of a combination of lectures, discussions, group activities, projects, and presentations. Through constructive feedback, we will all have the opportunity to teach and help each other. I encourage you to use this course to explore and broaden your world view. Please, challenge yourself and explore issues that matter to you.

Course Objectives

Students will:

- A. Acquire knowledge and improve critical reasoning and creative thinking by examining and evaluating the models and methods of problem solving and decision making from a variety of cultures.
- B. Study and apply principles and rules of evidence and reasoning.
- C. Apply communication and group discussion concepts to problem solving in a team.
- D. Engage in research, analysis, and examination of issues from a variety of perspectives including global, historical, cultural, class, and gender.
- E. Develop and integrate skills necessary for analytically reading, writing, and speaking about the major questions, problems, and issues of humans in diverse cultures.
- F. Apply principles of problem solving and reasoning to written and oral discourse.

Course Materials and Requirements

Text: Beebe, S.A. and Masterson, J.T. *Communication in Small Groups*, 9th Ed. (2008) Pearson.

One VHS videotape

Package of 4x6 notecards

Active email address that is checked twice a week by 10PM on the night prior to class

Course Requirements

- (1) Regularly attend class, on time, with an inquisitive mind (see attendance policy).
- (2) Participate actively in class discussions and activities (see participation policy).
- (3) Complete, on time, the required reading, assignments, and presentations.
- (4) Purchase and bring with you to every class a copy of the course textbook
- (5) Check email address twice a week by 10PM on the night prior to class

Policies

Attendance Policy

Your attendance is essential in any Speech course that requires performance, participation and evaluation. One of the most valuable learning tools in a course like this one is the experience of observing others' presentations, evaluating them, and then applying what you have learned.

Absences are a very serious matter. By enrolling in this class, you are committing to attend promptly. Anything less than timely attendance (read: no tardies) will affect your participation grade and could result in removal from the class. Attendance will be taken first thing at every class meeting. Make-up exams and presentations will only be granted for verifiable excuses (e.g., a doctor's note for an illness). If you are going to miss a class or know that you will be late, you must notify me as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to get yourself caught up.

Participation Policy

Because this class is an experience-based, skills-focused course, your participation is critical. Your participation grade includes being prepared and adding constructively to the class. You are expected not only to write and deliver your best work, but to be an intelligent and constructively critical discussion participant and audience member.

Specifically, any absence during the first two weeks of class will result in being dropped from the course. Each absence after the first that does not have a legitimate excuse (e.g., doctor's note) will result in a loss of points from your participation grade in addition to the loss of points of any assignment due that day. Three absences will result in a loss of all participation points and possibly result in removal from class. More than two late arrivals will also result in a loss of participation points. Please do not ask if you can make up an assignment or turn one in late.

Participation includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Active, constructive involvement in discussions, activities, and group work
- Staying focused on your work and tasks at hand
- Asking questions
- Fulfilling your commitments to your fellow students and me
- Turning off all pagers and cell phones during class time

Plagiarism and Cheating Policy

Simply stated: Don't. Academic dishonesty and cheating in any way will not be tolerated. To deter plagiarism (claiming others' ideas or words as one's own), most assignments written at home will be scanned by an anti-plagiarism software package. Additionally, cheating is grounds for immediate, automatic expulsion.

Honors Offering

This course offers an Honors cohort, which allows students who want to pursue further study of the subject matter to complete an additional assignment and receive Honors; your transcript will include an Honors designation. If you are interested, see me by week two.

Assignments

We will cover five major units in class. Most units will consist of the same pattern of activities:

- Lecture/discussion
- Major deliverable
- Skills practice

Your graded assignments by unit will be as follows:

Unit	Assignments
Listening/Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance review • Active listening report
Characteristics of groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group observation
Facilitation and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting agenda and ground rules • Minutes • Meeting preparation document • Self-review
Conflict, climate and cohesiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study presentation
Critical decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informative presentation

Additional Assignments

As a way to establish connection and comfort in class, you will be asked to complete the following introductory assignments:

- Three things in common
- Show and tell
- Deviant for a day

Speaking Order

Each student and group is expected to present at his or her designated time. Severe grade penalties will be applied to anyone who does not present when he or she is expected.

Quizzes

This course has no mid-term or final exams. However, you will be required to take three, non-cumulative quizzes. These quizzes may be multiple-choice or short answer they will cover information found in the reading and class conversation as well as lecture.

Grade Break Down

Quizzes	90 points	3 quizzes at 30 points each
3 Things In Common	10 points	
Show and Tell	10 points	
Deviant for a Day Presentation	10 points	
Performance review	20 points	
Active listening report	10 points	
Group observation	25 points	15 points for group observation and 10 for self-review
Informative Presentation	30 points	20 points for presentation, 5 points for outline, and 5 points for self-evaluation
Meeting Facilitation	35 points	20 points for facilitation, 5 points for agenda + ground rules, 5 points for minutes, 5 points for self-review
Case study	30 points	15 points shared among the group, 10 points for each individual, and 5 points for outline
Participation Points	30 points	A+ = 100%; A = 99%-93%; A- = 92%-90%; B+ = 89%-88%; B = 87%-83%; B- = 82%-80%; C+ = 79%-78%; C = 77%-70%;
Total	300 pts	D+ = 69%-68%; D = 67%-63%; D- = 62%-60%; F = 59% or less

** I will round up to the .50%, but not for .49%

Class Schedule

Date	Topics	Reading	Assignment (Due Date)
Sept 21	Welcome and Orientation Overview of communication and critical thinking	2-5 196-200	Print out material from web site http://faculty.deanza.edu/abrahamsmatt
Sept 23	Feedback Class ground rules		3 Things in Common (9/27) Performance review (10/5)
Sept 27	Listening <u>Skills practice</u> : Feedback 3 Things in Common	120-142	Active listening report (10/7) Show and Tell (9/30)
Sept 30	Characteristics of groups, part 1 Feedback group time Show and Tell	12-19 51-62	Deviant for a Day Presentations (10/12)
Oct 5	Characteristics of groups, part 2 Performance review Deviant for a Day class time	69-83	
Oct 7	Quiz #1 Active listening	316-322 101-115	Case Studies (10/26) Case Study Outlines (10/21)
Oct 12	Conflict, climate and cohesiveness Deviant for a Day Presentations	150-164	Group Observation (11/2)
Oct 14	<u>Skills practice</u> : Conflict and climate Case study time Delivering and Organizing Group presentations		
Oct 19	Facilitation and Leadership, part 1 Meeting Facilitation Topics and demo	306-315	Meeting Facilitations (11/4) Meeting Agendas + Ground Rules (11/4)
Oct 21	Facilitation and Leadership, part 2 Case Study Outlines	184-190	
Oct 26	Case Study Presentations/Facilitation Group Meetings (recorded)	283-297	
Oct 28	Case Study Presentations/Facilitation Group Meetings (recorded)		
Nov 2	Group Observation Facilitation preparation time -Agendas and ground rules check		
Nov 4	Group Observation Facilitation preparation time		
Nov 9	Meeting Facilitations Collect Agendas + Ground Rules		Meeting Minutes & Self-reviews (11/11)
Nov 11	Meeting Facilitations Collect Agendas + Ground Rules		Informative Preso & Self-Review (12/11) Informative Presentation Outline (12/4)
Nov 16	Quiz #2 Meeting Facilitation Minutes & Self-reviews Informative presentations assigned	207-214	
Nov 18	Critical Decision Making, part 1	259-269	
Nov 23	Critical Decision Making, part 2 Informative presentation work time	234-250	
Nov 25	HOLIDAY		
Nov 30	Critical Decision Making, part 3 Informative presentation work time	168-173	
Dec 2	Cults Informative presentation work time		
Dec 7	Quiz #3 Informative Presentation Outline		
FRI, Dec 11 **7am - 9am	Informative Presentations Informative Presentation Self-Review		

