

## Speech 15-Spring 2007

## Problem Solving and Critical Reasoning in Groups

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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:

- (1) Examine, understand, and apply the basic theories and tenets of group communication.
- (2) Acquire knowledge and improve critical reasoning and creative thinking by examining and evaluating the models and methods of group problem solving and decision making from a variety of cultures.
- (3) Learn and apply group communication skills, such as problem solving, negotiation and decision making.
- (4) Diagnose, evaluate and suggest improvement strategies for group communication.
- (5) Get practical experience so that they can become more effective communicators, listeners, and facilitators.

### Course Materials and Requirements

Text: Wilson, G.L. Groups in Context: Leadership and Participation in Small Groups, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. (2005). McGraw-Hill.

One VHS videotape and 3 computer par score test sheets and #2 pencil

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

Please review these policies carefully and thoroughly. Failure to comply with them will adversely affect your grade and, perhaps, result in either removal from or automatic failure of this course.

### **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
- On time and thorough completion of your assignments
- 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.

## 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"><li>• Performance review</li><li>• Active listening report</li></ul>

Characteristics of groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group observation report and presentation</li> </ul>
Facilitation and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting agenda and ground rules</li> <li>Minutes</li> <li>Meeting preparation document</li> </ul>
Conflict, climate and cohesiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case study presentation</li> </ul>
Critical decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informative presentation</li> </ul>

**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 and presentation	30 points	20 points for report and 10 for presentation
Informative Presentation	30 points	20 points for presentation, 5 points for outline, and 5 points for self-evaluation
Meeting Facilitation	30 points	15 points for facilitation, 5 points for agenda + ground rules, 5 points for minutes, 5 points for self-evaluation
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%; D+ = 69%-68%; D = 67%-63%; D- = 62%-60%; F = 59% or less
<b>Total</b>	<b>300 pts</b>	

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

## Class Schedule

Date	Topics	Reading	Assignment (Due Date)
Apr 10	Welcome and Orientation Class ground rules		<b>Print out material from web site</b> <a href="http://pages.sbcglobal.net/mattabrahams">http://pages.sbcglobal.net/mattabrahams</a>
Apr 12	Listening and Feedback	60-67 & 301-305	<b>3 Things in Common (4/18)</b>
Apr 17	<u>Skills practice:</u> Feedback <b>3 Things in Common</b>		<b>Performance review (4/24)</b> <b>Active listening report (4/24)</b>
Apr 19	Characteristics of groups, part 1 Feedback group time	140-161	<b>Group Observation Presentation (5/8)</b> <b>Show and Tell (4/26)</b>
Apr 24	Characteristics of groups, part 2 <b>Performance review</b> <b>Active listening report</b>	166-182	<b>Deviant for a Day Presentations (5/1)</b>
Apr 26	<b>Show and Tell</b> <b>Quiz #1</b> Deviant for a Day class time		
May 1	<b>Deviant for a Day Presentations</b> Conflict, climate and cohesiveness, part 1	284-298	<b>Assign Case Studies (5/15)</b> <b>Case Study Outlines (5/10)</b>
May 3	Conflict, climate and cohesiveness, part 2 <b>Group Observation Presentation</b>	254-277	
May 8	<u>Skills practice:</u> Conflict and climate Case study time		
May 10	Facilitation and Leadership, part 1 Meeting Facilitation Topics Assigned <b>Case Study Outlines</b>	214-222	
May 15	<b>Case Studies</b>		
May 17	<b>Case Studies</b>		
May 22	Facilitation and Leadership, part 2 Meeting Facilitation Topics Assigned Facilitation demonstration	186-203	<b>Meeting Facilitations (5/29)</b> <b>Meeting Facilitation Agendas +</b> <b>Ground Rules (5/29)</b>
May 24	Facilitation preparation time -Agendas and ground rules check		
May 29	<b>Meeting Facilitations</b> <b>Collect Agendas + Ground Rules</b>		<b>Meeting Facilitation Minutes &amp; Self-</b> <b>reviews (5/5)</b>
May 31	<b>Meeting Facilitations</b> <b>Collect Agendas + Ground Rules</b>		

June 5	<b>Quiz #2 Meeting Facilitation Minutes &amp; Self-reviews</b>		<b>Informative Presentation (3/22)</b>
June 7	Critical Decision Making, part 1 Informative presentations assigned	73-84 & 93-94	<b>Informative Presentation (finals period) Informative Presentation Outline (6/21)</b>
June 12	Critical Decision Making, part 2 Informative presentation work time	306-312	
June 14	Critical Decision Making, part 3 Informative presentation work time	Hand out	
June 19	<u>Skills practice:</u> Critical Thinking Informative presentation work time		<b>Informative Presentation Self-Review (finals period)</b>
June 21	<b>Quiz #3 Informative Presentation Outline</b>		
Finals meeting* (2 hours)	<b>Informative Presentations Informative Presentation Self-Review</b>		

\*The 8:30AM Speech 15 class holds its final on Tuesday, June 26<sup>th</sup> from 7 a.m.- 9 a.m.

\* The 1:30PM Speech 15 class holds its final on Wednesday, June 27<sup>th</sup> from 1:45 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.