

## Speech 15-Summer 2008

## 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

One additional hour to be arranged working in Cross Cultural Partners and/or use of the Listening and Speaking Laboratory

### 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, logic, and reasoning.
- C. Apply communication and group discussion concepts and management 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.

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

## **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.

*Summer classes are condensed and accelerated. Missing one day is equivalent to missing close to a week of material.*

### ***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 informative 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	

### 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 informative presentation	30 points	20 points for presentation (10 shared and 10 individual), 5 points outline, 5 points self-review
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	10 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>250 pts</b>	

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

## Class Schedule

Date	Topics	Reading	Assignment (Due Date)
June 30	Welcome and Orientation Class ground rules		<b>Print out material from web site</b> <a href="http://faculty.deanza.fhda.edu/abrahamsmtt">http://faculty.deanza.fhda.edu/abrahamsmtt</a>
July 1	Listening and Feedback		<b>3 Things in Common (7/2)</b>
July 2	<u>Skills practice:</u> Feedback <b>3 Things in Common</b>		<b>Performance review (7/8)</b> <b>Active listening report (7/8)</b>
July 7	Characteristics of groups Feedback group time	6-8	<b>Group Informative Presentation (7/15)</b> <b>Show and Tell (7/9)</b>
July 8	<b>Performance review</b> <b>Active listening report</b>	10-20	<b>Deviant for a Day Presentations (7/16)</b>
July 9	<b>Show and Tell</b> <b>Quiz #1</b> Deviant for a Day class time		
July 14	<b>Deviant for a Day Presentations</b> Conflict, climate and cohesiveness, part 1		<b>Assign Case Studies (7/22)</b> <b>Case Study Outlines (7/23)</b>
July 15	Conflict, climate and cohesiveness, part 2 <b>Group Informative Presentation</b>		
July 16	Delivery and Organization <u>Skills practice:</u> Conflict and climate Case study time		
July 21	Facilitation and Leadership, part 1 Meeting Facilitation Topics Assigned <b>Case Study Outlines</b> <b>Quiz #2</b>	32-36	
July 22	<b>Case Studies</b>	54-60	
July 23	<b>Case Studies</b>	61-68	
July 28	Facilitation and Leadership, part 2 Meeting Facilitation Topics Assigned Facilitation demonstration		<b>Meeting Facilitations (8/4)</b> <b>Meeting Facilitation Agendas + Ground Rules (8/4)</b>
July 29	Critical Decision Making, part 1 Facilitation preparation time	37-53	
July 30	Critical Decision Making, part 2 Facilitation preparation time -Agendas and ground rules check	Hand out	<b>Meeting Facilitation Minutes &amp; Self-reviews (8/6)</b>
Aug 4	<b>Meeting Facilitations</b> <b>Collect Agendas + Ground Rules</b>		
Aug 5	<b>Meeting Facilitations</b> <b>Collect Agendas + Ground Rules</b>		
Aug 6	<b>Quiz #3</b> <b>Meeting Facilitation Minutes &amp; Self-reviews</b>		

## Group Ground Rules

Respect

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Support

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Follow through

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Open communication

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## Grade Record

Assignment	Points received	Points possible
3 Things in common		10
Performance review		20
Active listening report		10
Show and tell		10
Quiz #1		30
Deviant for a day presentation		10
Group observation		
-Report		20
-Presentation		10
Case study		
-Presentation		25 (15 group + 10 indiv)
-Outline		5
Meeting facilitation		
-Facilitation		15
-Agenda + ground rules		5
-Minutes		5
-Self-evaluation		5
Quiz #2		30
Quiz #3		30
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>250</b>