

Communication 301: Small Group Communication, Fall 2019

Class Information

Class Time: Mon/Wed/Fri: 12-12:50

Classroom: Science Center B012

Instructor Contact Information

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1:00-2:00 MW

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Introduction

Welcome to COMM301, Small Group Communication! In a recent Forbes.com article, Grant Freeland reflects on experts' opinions on success in business and basketball. He writes, "...*success in today's business world depends more on collaboration and teamwork than on the performance of any single individual, even one considered a superstar*" ([Freeland, 2018](#)). Whether you become an employee in an organization that hires thousands, or a self-employed business owner, being able to communicate and work well in a group is a soft skill that will get you ahead. This workshop-styled course is designed to improve your group communication skills by addressing three key themes: 1) What is a group? 2) Becoming an effective group and 3) Motivating and leading groups.

The field of *communication studies* stresses critical thinking and how reality is created, maintained, or challenged through our communication practices. This course will introduce you to the theories associated with *small group communication*, examine how small groups function within society, and help you learn ways to improve the communication between you and members of the real-world groups to which you currently or will belong.

Please note that while OnCourse is where you will be submitting your individual application exercises and checking your Gradebook, all other course materials, including your readings, will be available to you on our [class website](#).

Required Readings

You can access your readings for COMM301 through [this link](#). This class is listed as an [OER](#) course, which means that the material draws from Open Education Resources – in short, **the readings are free!** Rather than assign one book, I've compiled a selection of readings for you that I feel cover key concepts of small group communication in a useful and user-friendly way.

Given the ease of access of these materials, I am fully expecting you to have **read the materials before coming to class**. That way, the lecture is actually your second exposure to the concepts.

Course Structure

This class will be conducted primarily in a discussion format with some brief lectures that cover key components from the readings. Team discussions, team projects and individual application exercises and quizzes will form the basis of this course. Preparation, critical thinking and willingness to engage are key. This is *not* a place for [social loafing](#)!

Learning Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This course and all its assessments (quizzes, in-class assignments, individual application assignments and class discussion) are structured around the learning objectives and projected outcomes listed below:

1. To **develop personal confidence to work with others as a team** and to complete *team projects, activities and presentations* through collaboration, trust, mutual respect and personal advocacy toward accomplishing personal and group goals.
2. To **foster an open academic discourse community** by listening to and contributing multiple perspectives.
3. To **celebrate and capitalize on individual differences and skill sets**, and actively discover how those differences can foster the strength of a heterogeneous group.

4. To **negotiate a shared vision** and to align creative energy toward group-developed goals while working in different types of management and leadership situations.
5. To **engage in mindful dialogue and navigate conflict constructively** to formulate alternative solutions to “real world” group problems within the scope of the group’s goals.
6. To **enhance critical thinking and academic skills** while reflecting on, analyzing and using the various concepts studied in the course.
7. To **grow as a self-directed learner** by analyzing reading assignments, applying pertinent concepts to the group process and by assessing individual learning through *quizzes, discussion responses* and *application assignments*.

Teams

Immediately following drop/add, you will be sorted into permanent teams for the semester. These teams will be chosen randomly, and no swapping is allowed. This is meant to replicate a more realistic working environment, in which you are placed with the same people with whom you must work on projects, communicate, and quite simply, get along. You may establish a close relationship with your team by the end of the semester. You may find you remain “work friends” only. That is okay. It is not necessary to *like* everyone you work with, nor is it plausible that you will. However, you must learn to work *well* with one another.

Disagreements should be dealt with professionally and maturely. Social loafing should not be tolerated by you or your group. However, you should deal with these conflicts yourself. You would not expect an employee to run to his/her boss because someone in accounting didn’t do their part. You would expect that that employee would find a way to communicate with that individual the importance of their participation, and you would expect that individual to realize s/he had been slacking, and pick up the pace.

Grading

Checking your gradebook: Your grade will be calculated by what is posted in the OnCourse grade book. Due to glitches within all computerized systems and the possibility of human error, it happens, on occasion, that a grade is not accurately recorded or reflected. While I try to monitor for such mistakes, ***it is your responsibility to check your gradebook regularly and report any errors you find to me.*** Once reported to me, I will fix it immediately.

PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR GRADEBOOK REFLECTS YOUR ASSESSMENT SCORES ONLY. Sometimes an aggregate course percentage will appear that does not represent your course percentage. **ALWAYS DO YOUR OWN CALCULATIONS.** I intentionally make my course grade calculations very user-friendly. If you are unsure about how to calculate your score, please use the Grade Generator Spreadsheet provided for you on the class website (closer to the end of the semester).

Turning in and grading: Each assignment takes about 7-10 days to evaluate and grade. Late work will take longer.

In-class assignments are to be turned in by the end of the class that day. They must be completed using the Google Form provided in the assignment description, found [here](#) on the class website.

Application exercises are to meet the word-limit indicated in the guidelines and are to be submitted electronically. Please submit them on OnCourse. As these assignments are digital, you do not need to worry about formatting. You can find more information about these exercises [here](#).

Late assignments: You are expected to complete assignments by the due date indicated on the course schedule. Late assignments will receive an automatic **30% grade reduction** and will be accepted up to **one week after the due date**.

Therefore, it is recommended that if you anticipate missing a class in which work is due, come to see me during my office hours prior to your absence and turn your work in early. This is especially advisable for in-class assignments. Since all group members receive the same grade for the in-class assignments, a late penalty of 30% is shared by everyone! This late work policy is necessary so that I can return graded assignments in a reasonable amount of time.

Please note that I use a typical grading scheme found at SUNY Fredonia:

A	100 – 93	B+	89 – 86	C+	79 – 76	D+	69 – 66	F	59 or less
A-	92 – 90	B	85 – 83	C	75 – 73	D	65 – 63		
		B-	82 – 80	C-	72 – 70	D-	62 – 60		

Grade calculation: Your grade in this class consist of group assessments (presentations, in-class activities and a final project) and individual assessments (application assignments, discussion reflections and quizzes). Your grade will be calculated by dividing the number of points you have earned by the total number of possible points for this class (400) and then applying the appropriate letter grade to the percentage. Once you have calculated your percentage, you can determine the letter grade you will earn. Extra credit will not be granted on an individual basis.

Here are your assessments and their point values:

ASSESSMENT	QUANTITY x VALUE	TOTAL POINTS
Team assessments:		
Case study presentations	2 x 20	40
In-class activities	6 x 20	120
Final project	1 x 40	40
Individual assessments:		
Application exercises	4 x 30	120
Quizzes*	6 x 10	60
Discussion reflections*	8 x 5	40
GRAND TOTAL		420

*The lowest of seven scores will be dropped. There are no make-ups given for missed quizzes.

**The lowest of 9 reflection scores will be dropped. There are no make-ups given for missed reflections.

Team Assessments

Case study presentations: One of the benefits of group communication is that we can learn a lot more from multiple viewpoints than we can from just one. That is why you and your team will be presenting to the class (rather than hearing one sole viewpoint, that is to say, mine). I will be giving lectures over the course of the semester in which I will concentrate on 3-5 main points from each reading. Twice over the course of the semester, *your* team will give a 30-minute presentation. For more information, click [here](#).

The first part will be a 10-15-minutes presentation or lecture of 3-5 different main points from any current reading. Then, you will present a 10-15-minute case study from “the real world” that illustrates or ties in to those points. Then, you will facilitate a 10-15-minute discussion that ties it all together. More information on these presentations will be given in class and posted on the class website.

In-Class Activities: In-Class activities are designed to help you further explore course concepts without adding to your outside-of-class workload. They are designed to be started and completed in class (except for taking them home and typing them). Each activity will relate to a topic we’ve covered in class and will provide you with a (hopefully) fun, hands-on way to apply the material you’re learning in class. Details on each assignment will be given in class on the day it’s assigned. For more information, click [here](#).

Final Project: Your final project has perhaps the fewest parameters of any assignment I’ve given: Determine a problem that exists within a community that matters to your group. Then, develop and execute a plan of action which will enact some sort of change, have an effect, or in some way make a difference.

We will discuss this project more in length during class. You and your team will also be checking in with me throughout the semester during arranged office hour meetings. Therefore, you shouldn’t feel like you’re flying blind with this project – while you will have complete autonomy, you should also view me as a resource to ask questions of or bounce ideas around with. You will present your final endeavor as a class presentation (10 points) and as a portfolio report to me (30 points). For more information on this project, click [here](#).

Individual Assessments

Application Exercises: A description of all four application assignments can be found on the class website and on OnCourse (where you will turn them in). Each application assignment is centered around four connections of textbook content to your own real-life group interactions. Application assignments should be between 300-400 words (no more, no fewer). You can feel free to check in with me as you’re drafting your assignment. *Checking in* should not be confused with *proofreading* or *ensuring an A*; rather, I will be happy to answer any specific questions you may have on your assignment drafts, or let you know if you’re “heading in the right direction.” For more information, click [here](#).

Discussion Reflections: Throughout this semester, you will be engaging in team discussions in class. The discussions themselves are not graded as I'd rather you involve yourselves on the merit of engaging in some good dialogue rather than worrying solely about accomplishing a task for a grade. However, when you're finished with each discussion, I would like you to answer a question on a Google Form (link provided the day of the discussion). These reflections will be graded based on the following rubric:

5	Excellent, relevant responses composed as complete sentences free of errors.
4	Very good responses, but were not in complete sentences and/or contained errors.
3	Good responses, but more content overall would have strengthened your work.
2	Minimal effort reflected – one-sentence/one-phrase answers.
1	Minimal effort reflected – one-word answers.
0	Response was not turned in or was turned in after the deadline.

Nine Reflections will take place over the semester; I will drop your one lowest score. For more information, click [here](#).

Quizzes: Rather than one large midterm and final exam, I will be giving you seven 10-point quizzes throughout the semester and will count your six highest scores. No make-ups will be given for a missed quiz. Quizzes may be multiple choice or short answer, and they will be more about “applying the material” than “regurgitating the readings.”

Course Policies

Accountability: It is your responsibility to monitor your progress on the course website, follow along in the syllabus, know when assignments are due and when tests are to occur, and to check your school email daily.

Attendance: You are expected to not only be in class on time, but to also make appropriate contributions to class discussion. If you are absent on a day that your team works on an in-class team assignment, you must communicate with your team and balance out the work. If a member was absent, give him or her an additional task to help complete to make up for his or her absence to your team during the in-class time. In this way, you may “make up” for your absence. *I will not organize this make-up – it is up to you and your team to come to a mutually-beneficial agreement.*

If you miss a quiz or an in-class discussion, you cannot make it up. You cannot post responses to discussions if you were not there in class on the day in which it took place. To do so constitutes academic dishonesty.

It is your responsibility to follow through to get assignments and materials missed if you are absent.

As much of the success of this class relies on group preparedness and interdependence, please note the following attendance policy: While you should try to be in class for every session, life happens, and **you are permitted up to 5 absences**. Understand that this does not free you from responsibilities – if you miss a quiz or discussion, you cannot make it up; if your team is working on a project, you must find a way to contribute – but you will not be directly penalized for the *absence itself*, nor do I need to see documentation for why you missed class.

However: **Upon your 6th absence, regardless of reason or excuse, your final grade will be reduced by a half a letter** (a B becomes a B-, a C- becomes a D+). Note that six absences equate two weeks of class. This is a hefty amount of time missed, and thus, this number of absences, **regardless of cause or reason**, will have a direct effect on your grade. For each ensuing absence beyond your sixth, your grade will continue to drop in half-letter increments.

An attendance sheet will be passed around in class. It is your responsibility to make sure you get it and sign it as this will be the primary method I will use to determine your attendance.

Punctuality: Please be on time. While accidental lateness happens to everyone on a rare occasion (myself included), *chronic* lateness is disruptive and disrespectful and will not be tolerated. **You are expected to be in the classroom and seated prior to the start time of class, not walking in the door as class is starting. If you are going to be more than 10 minutes late, please do not come into the classroom. You have missed class for that day.**

The first day of class is on August 26. The last day to add the class is XX. **If you add the class** on XX and begin attending on XX, you will have missed four class meetings. **These will count toward your absence tally.** To avoid a loss in grade points, please be mindful of your absences for the rest of the semester if you register and begin attending the class once the semester is underway.

Etiquette: Please **silence** your cell phones before coming to class. While laptops/tablets/phones are welcomed in the classroom as note-taking devices, using them to watch videos, chat or browse social media is disruptive and disrespectful. Please feel free to bring a snack as long as others can't smell it (warm food is really not recommended) or hear it (crunch, crunch, crunch). Be mindful of others, please!

Classroom condition: Please practice carry-in/carry-out when you are in the classroom – it is my request that we leave the room in the condition in which we found it or better, if possible.

Respect: Although you can expect some lively discussion in this class, students are expected to respect gender, sexual identity, race, religion and other similarities and differences. Conflicts (they will happen) should be navigated maturely, respectfully and constructively.

SUNY Fredonia's Support Services for Students with Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations are available to students with documented disabilities at Fredonia. Students who may require instructional and/or examination accommodations should contact the office of Disability Support Services for Students (DSS), located on the 4th Floor of the Reed Library (716-673-3270 or disability.services@fredonia.edu). The DSS coordinator will review documentation and determine accommodations on a case-by-case basis. DSS will notify me with an accommodation letter which verifies that you have registered with the DSS office and which describes any accommodations approved for you. After you have met with the DSS coordinator, please contact me so that we can discuss any needed accommodations.

Statements of Philosophy and Statements on Academic Dishonesty

Department of Communication Philosophy

Communication does not exist outside of relationships. With this in mind, the faculty of the SUNY Fredonia Department of Communication believes that all communicators, whether in the classroom, on the air, or within created works, have a responsibility to themselves and their audience.

The faculty believes that it is our responsibility to provide perspective and structure as students make choices about their work, and consequently, about themselves and who they are as adults and scholars. We encourage students to make the effort to consider the consequences of their choices for themselves, for others, and for those relationships.

The faculty encourages projects and behaviors that are undertaken with thoughtful respect and consideration for others. We support and encourage work that is both ethical and enriching to the students' community and to personal and professional relationships. All students should review the Department of Communication Ethical and Professional Standards [here](#).

Course schedule

To view the Course Schedule, please click [here](#).

SUNY Fredonia's Statement on Academic Dishonesty

SUNY Fredonia's Statement on Academic Dishonesty can be found [here](#).

My Personal Statement on Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism can entail an act as rash as purchasing a paper or project, to as seemingly incidental as copying a line or two from an online source and plugging it, uncited, into your application assignment. Plagiarism is when you take someone else's idea or words and pass them off as your own. **I am very good at catching plagiarism.**

If I discover that you have committed an intentional act of plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty (e.g. cheating on a quiz, forging attendance signatures), the very least that will happen, depending on the [severity](#) of the act, is that you will **earn a zero for that assessment**, and we'll discuss the incident and work to prevent future occurrences. The very most that will happen is that you will be **expelled from SUNY Fredonia**.

Do your own work. Even if you're running out of time. Even if you know it's last-minute and not your best.