

# CSS 3304 Small Group Communication

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## Course Description

You will spend a significant portion of your life interacting with and participating in *groups*, whether they are professional or leisurely, voluntary or mandatory. Thus, this course is designed to strengthen your understanding of how communication affects your experience in small groups. Our goal is to become more competent communicators in these settings. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- ♦ Identify key theories and concepts concerning small groups;
- ♦ Understand how group dynamics affect group communication processes;
- ♦ Contribute to group processes including creative and critical thinking, decision-making, conflict management, and problem-solving;
- ♦ Effectively plan and participate in group meetings and presentations.

## Required Text

*In Mixed Company: Communicating in Small Groups and Teams* (7<sup>th</sup> Edition) by J. Dan Rothwell

- ♦ This text is available at the Baylor Bookstore
- ♦ We *will* be using the book, so please find a copy to buy, rent, borrow, or share.
- ♦ Any additional class readings will be posted to Blackboard or provided in hard copy for easy access.

## Course Expectations & Policies

### Attendance

You are required by the Baylor College of Arts & Sciences to attend at least 75% of class periods. If you fail to meet this requirement, you will automatically receive a failing grade in the course. An absence is an absence, no matter what the reason. University-related absences and those due to illness/family emergencies *do count* when tallying absences.

### Late Work/Make-up Work

Students are expected to complete/submit all work on time. All written work should be submitted in hard copy form *in class*, unless otherwise noted. If you fail to bring a hard copy to class for whatever reason, you may email me a copy of your assignment by 5:00 p.m. on the due date, *but be aware* that you will automatically receive 25% penalty. *Assignments will not be accepted past the due date.* If you miss class on an assignment due date due to university-sanctioned travel, a serious personal illness, or a family emergency, I will allow you to make up work that was missed on that day. However, there are 2 important conditions: (1) You must notify me of your absence *before or during* class (not after) and (2) you must provide me with *official written documentation*. Eligible, *approved* make-up work must be completed no later than 1 week following the normal turn-in date and will not be accepted after that.

### Participation

This is an interactive course and your input is highly valued. I expect you to come to class ready and willing to participate in the class discussion. This includes capably answering/discussing questions I ask, as well as voluntarily adding content to the day's discussion via comments, stories, analysis, critique, personal reflections, etc. *Important question to ask yourself: Does my individual presence add value to this class?*

### Personal Responsibility

As your instructor, I am *always* here to help. But, ultimately, it is your responsibility to take advantage of the resources that are available to you, including my assistance. I wholeheartedly abide by the following philosophy: You are the master of your destiny in this course.

### Classroom Behavior

All students will be expected to treat each other with respect, courtesy, and openness. While it is perfectly acceptable to express opposing viewpoints and provide constructive criticism to each other, it is not acceptable to ridicule, belittle, marginalize, or embarrass anyone else. Should any student act in a manner that is disruptive or disrespectful, I reserve

the right to directly address that person on the matter during or outside of class; additionally, disruptive students may be asked to leave the class for the remainder of the course period.

### **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism is the act of representing, either directly or indirectly, and without proper source documentation, someone else's work as your own. Plagiarism will not be tolerated; if you are caught participating in any form of academic dishonesty, you will be removed from the course and will receive an "F." For a complete description of Baylor's Honor Code Policy & Procedures, please refer to: <http://www.baylor.edu/honorcode>.

## **Coursework**

### **Readings**

You will regularly be assigned to read chapters from the textbook or other supplemental readings; these assignments are listed on the course schedule. Any non-textbook readings will be posted to Blackboard or provided in hard copy.

### **Quizzes/Exercises (50 points)**

At various points throughout the semester, I will assign quizzes, in-class activities, or homework exercises in conjunction with course content

### **Examinations (200 points)**

There will be 2 exams over the course of the semester. Exams will consist primarily of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. The content of the exams will be drawn from readings and lectures. A light exam review sheet will be provided for you.

### **Group Work (150 points)**

You will be placed in a 4-6 member group and this will be your project group for the remainder of the term. You will work with your group on three main tasks, as well as several in-class activities.

- ♦ Group Task #1: Group Contract Negotiation
- ♦ Group Task #2: TV Group Analysis Project
- ♦ Group Task #3: Virtual Meeting Problem-Solving Task

### **Papers (150 points)**

In conjunction with the group project, you will complete a series of three 2-3 page mini-papers describing and reflecting over your group's handling each of the group tasks. At the end of the semester, you will write a final analysis paper (6-8 pages, double spaced), which is due on the last day of class. In this final paper, you will go into depth regarding your cumulative group experience, offering your critical, reflective analysis of the health and performance of your group overall.

### **Group Participation (50 points)**

Towards the end of the semester, you will complete an evaluative grade sheet for all the members of your group. Your participation grade is determined by the evaluations of others in your group, meaning you always want to do your best as a group member! These evaluations serve to illustrate how involved you were in the group, and assess your overall contribution to the group.

## **Grading**

### **Grade System**

This course is graded through use of a system in which you simply accumulate points over the entire semester. Grades are not based on averages, percentages, or weights; all the points you earn (including bonus points) are weighted equally and go into a big "bucket" of points. Your final grade is determined solely by how many points you have at the end of the semester. All grades will be posted to Blackboard and can be accessed by logging in to <http://my.baylor.edu>.

### **Grading Scale**

- A = 537-600points
- B+ = 519-536 points
- B = 477-518 points
- C+ = 459-476 points
- C = 417-458 points
- D = 357-416 points
- F = 0-356 points