



COMM-106: SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION

Effective Term

Fall 2026

BOT Approval Date

03/20/2025

Discipline

COMM - Communication Studies

Course Number

106

Course Title

Small Group Communication

Short Title

Small Group Communication

Credit Status (CB 04)

D - Credit - Degree applicable

Units**Lecture Units**

3.00

Total Units

3.00

Hours**Lecture Contact Hours**

48-54

Out of Class Hours Lecture

96-108

Total Contact Hours

48 - 54

Total Out of Class Hours

96 - 108

Total Student Learning Hours

144 - 162

Distance Education

Yes

Distance Education**Distance Education Type**

Hybrid Only

What will be done in face-to-face meetings

Activities in support of lecture material which includes group presentations, activities, and other relevant exercises.

**Are you using publisher content?**

No

Regular Substantive Interaction

Instructor-to-student, student-to-student, and student-to-content contact shall be distributed in a manner that will ensure regular substantive interaction (RSI) is maintained not only weekly but also for the duration of the course. Instructor interactions should be equivalent in time, quality and consistency to the engagement students would receive in a face-to-face course—for example, through announcements, discussion participation, personalized feedback, video messages, or other instructional communications. Instructors are expected to be responsive to student inquiries within a 24-72 hour time frame excluding holidays. RSI will be maintained through a variety of methods:

- Orientation - Students must be oriented to the online and face-to-face portions at the start of the course.
- Announcements - Announcements using the course management system must be posted at least weekly to keep students current on course events, due dates, materials, etc.
- Discussion Forums - Content-related discussion forums within the designated CMS will include appropriate instructor participation and will be initiated and maintained, with timely feedback provided. Instructors are required to monitor the discussions and related activities to provide guidance and direction. Open-ended discussion boards may be used to further learning and interaction.
- MSJC Communication – Instructor will use MSJC-administered communication tools (such as email or the designated CMS communication tools) to regularly communicate with and provide ease of access to students.
- Timely Feedback - Timely feedback on student work will be provided by the instructor, which may include comments and/or rubrics, within the Grades area of the designated CMS.
- Scheduled Meetings – Hybrid and synchronous courses will meet at regularly scheduled times.

ADA Compliance - All course interactions and content must be designed with accessibility in mind and meet ADA requirements.

C-ID (Admin Only)

C-ID COMM 140

Catalog Description

This course studies communication in small group contexts. Topics include the development of group rules and norms, the emergence of leadership and other roles, and the importance of diversity in decision making. Through participation in group simulations and discussions, the student will learn creativity and critical thinking in problem solving and will develop skills of listening, leadership, consensus building, and conflict management.

Codes**TOP Code (CB 03)**

1506.00 - Speech Communication

CIP Code

09.0100 - Communication, General.

Repeatability Code

No

Grading Option

Letter grade OR P/NP

Minimum Qualifications

Minimum Qualifications	And/Or
Communication Studies (Speech Communication) (Masters Required)	End

GE Information**Check GE Types Requested**

AA/AS D2 - Communication & Analytical Thinking

Learning Objectives**Learning Objectives****Learning Objective**

1. Differentiate small group communication from other forms of communication and assess advantages and disadvantages of using small groups to plan and implement various types of discussion activities, especially with respect to decision-making and problem solving.

2. Analyze the relationships among small groups, their larger organizational systems, and the social, political, and cultural environment in which they operate.
3. Observe and evaluate the emergence of roles, norms, cohesiveness, and leadership in classroom and natural social and work groups.
4. Assess the task needs and social climate of groups and adapt behavior to meet the group task objectives and socio-emotional needs of group members.
5. Select and implement appropriate organizational strategies for various group purposes, including decision-making and problem-solving.
6. Describe the nature of consensus and compare the process of consensus-building to other methods of decision-making and problem-solving, such as voting or negotiating.
7. Analyze realistic group conflict situations and formulate communication strategies for constructive management of these conflicts.
8. Analyze and assess attitudes towards marginalized populations including people of color, sexual orientation, and others so effected.

Learning Outcome Information

Course Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome

1. The student will be able to evaluate the emergence of roles, norms, cohesiveness, and leadership within a group/team in various contexts.
2. The student will be able to describe the nature of consensus and compare the process of consensus-building to other methods of decision-making and problem-solving.
3. The student will be able to analyze realistic group conflict situations and formulate communication strategies for competent management of these conflicts.
4. The student will be able to enhance group development and productivity, inclusive of effectively addressing a "Difficult Group Member."

Content

Course Lecture Content

1. Communication Competence in Groups
 - a. Myths about communication
 - b. Communication defined
 - c. Communication competence
 - d. Achieving communication competence
 - e. Definition of a group
2. Groups as Systems
 - a. Interconnectedness of parts
 - b. Adaptability to a changing environment
 - c. Influence of size
3. Groups and Diversity
 - a. Marginalized populations
 - b. Equity and inclusion within groups
 - c. Diversity and synergy
 - d. Attitudes and biases against marginalized populations
4. Meetings: Standard and Virtual
 - a. Technological virtual group options
 - b. Benefits and challenges of virtual groups
 - c. Improving virtual group effectiveness
5. Group Development
 - a. Primary dimensions of groups
 - b. Periodic phases of group development
6. Developing the Group Climate

- a. Positivity versus negativity
 - b. Competition and cooperation
 - c. Communication and group climate
7. Roles in Groups
- a. Influence of roles
 - b. Types of roles
 - c. Role emergence
 - d. Role adaptability
 - e. New comers and system disturbance
8. Group Leadership
- a. Definition of leadership
 - b. Leadership emergence
 - c. Perspectives on effective leadership
9. Developing Effective Teams
- a. Standard groups versus teams
 - b. Team members
 - c. Building teamwork
 - d. Competent team leadership
10. Defective Group Decision Making and Problem Solving
- a. Information overload
 - b. Information underload
 - c. Mindsets: critical thinking frozen solid
 - d. Collect inferential error: uncritical thinking
 - e. Group polarization: extremely uncritical thinking
 - f. Groupthink: critical thinking in suspended animation
11. Effective Decision Making and Problem Solving
- a. Group discussion functions and procedures
 - b. Critical thinking and effective decision-making
 - c. Participation
 - d. Conducting effective meetings
 - e. Creative problem solving
12. Power in Groups: A Central Dynamic
- a. The nature of power
 - b. Consequences of power imbalances
 - c. Power distance: cultural variation
 - d. Balancing power
13. Conflict Management and Negotiation
- a. Nature of conflict
 - b. Styles of conflict management
 - c. Situational factors
 - d. Negotiation strategies
 - e. Anger management

Methods of Instruction

Method

Activity

Integration

Small group application of skills to realistic situations (e.g., group formation and tension reduction, emergence of roles and norms, development of leadership, and decision-making and problem-solving methods, inclusive of "the difficult member," and conflict management and resolution) can be used. The development of principles such as empathy, ethics, language, and critical thinking that pertain to small group communication. Playing the game Ecotonos, in which students portray the characteristics of various cultures, could be one such activity. This game is easily adaptable for DEI applications in that various marginalized populations can be substituted for cultures.

DE Adaptations for MOI

Class activities can be adapted using built-in features of a course management system (CMS). For example, class activities can be facilitated via threaded discussions. Collaborations can be promoted by creating groups within the CMS and assigning them a topic to research jointly where the students will use their group page within the CMS to communicate, post findings, share notes, discuss their thoughts, and jointly edit any required documents. The instructor may use threaded discussions as a method of instruction. For example, the instructor may participate in the activity through examples or interaction with students. Instructions for class activities will meet accessibility requirements.

Method

Discussion

Integration

Small group application of content (e.g., small group discussion and analysis of theories of group interaction). Discussions will, with supporting visual materials (overhead slides or multimedia), introduce concepts and communication skills throughout the course (e.g., communication theories; perception, culture, and social variables including issues faced by marginalized populations including stereotypes, biases, and racism; nonverbal communication, and group climate and group conflict management). Such discussions will encourage students to exchange ideas, findings and comprehension of course objectives in a learning environment where students feel safe and respected expressing differing views. Instructions to discussion boards will meet accessibility requirements.

DE Adaptations for MOI

Small group experiential activities such as Ecotonos will be created in conjunction with the Course Management System (CMS). The experiential activities have accessible course content. The game will engage students in problem-solving by developing and applying skills and strategies for small group communication through asynchronous activity. Instructions to discussion boards will meet accessibility requirements. All communication is through the Course Management System (CMS).

Method

Lecture

Integration

Lecture presentation and small group discussion with supporting visual materials (overhead slides or multimedia), introducing group theory and communication skills throughout the course (e.g., the emergence of rules and norms, problem-solving and decision-making processes, consensus-building and leadership skills, and the importance of diversity in group effectiveness) will be used. Lectures will include topics such as international discussions that require some understanding of cultural norms and the conditions faced by marginalized populations.

DE Adaptations for MOI

Online lectures will consist of accessible instructor-prepared materials including captioned lecture videos, text-based lectures, adapted PowerPoint presentations, and links to web pages, delivered through CMS, which deal with small group communication.

Method

Observation and Demonstration

Integration

The instructor (in-class) and students (outside of class) will observe groups for the purpose of analysis and assessment of group interactions, based on concepts and criteria developed in the course. Fishbowl methodologies will be used to illustrate a variety of concepts especially as related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in groups.

DE Adaptations for MOI

Small group presentations will be recorded and uploaded to CMS. Accessible instructions on how to record and upload presentations will be available on the CMS.

Method

Role Playing/Simulation

Integration

Small group creation of simulated group situations and role-play of realistic group communication to raise awareness, stimulate discussion, and actively practice constructive skills (i.e. reaching consensus, the "difficult group member," conflict management, and issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion related to small groups).

DE Adaptations for MOI

Role plays and other simulations will be recorded and uploaded to CMS. Accessible instructions on how to record and upload presentations will be available on the CMS.

Methods of Evaluation**Method**

Exams/Tests

Integration

Periodic short objective tests will be used to test student's knowledge of course-related concepts such as the characteristics of small group communication, the influence of social norms, gender, and culture, the nature of language, the findings of nonverbal communication research, the emergence of group roles and norms, and the nature of creative and critical thinking processes in groups. Exams will also ask students about information related to attitudes towards marginalized populations in ingroup behavior. Midterm and final exams: A combination of objective questions of important concepts (previously quizzed, applied, or discussed in class) and essay questions that show analysis and application of group communication skills. This will allow the instructor to evaluate how well the students are able to recall and apply meaningful areas of the course.

DE Adaptations for MOE

Unit quizzes/exams offered through CMS will assess course learning objectives. Quizzes should be timed, open book/note, focusing on course learning objectives. Quizzes may be graded manually by the instructor or through the CMS auto-grading system. The instructor will provide correct responses, comments, and grades within two weeks of the due date of these quizzes within the gradebook using the CMS.

Method

Group Projects

Integration

The instructor will provide oral evaluations of small group activities (discussions of concepts, application of skills, role-play simulations) throughout the course. One such group project could be the symposium, a semi-structured public discussion. The Band Implosion Project, an analysis of the life cycle of a popular band represents one such possibility. Students will be graded on how well they can organize, collaborate, interact, and present material.

DE Adaptations for MOE

Evaluation of student group projects that illustrate the nature of small group communication will be accomplished by observing projects posted in CMS and/or collecting written assignments via e-mail and assessing them in relation to stated course objectives. All material will meet accessibility requirements. Written feedback will be returned to the student/group via e-mail or CMS within two weeks of the assignment's due date. Rubrics/clear instructions will be provided.

Method

Papers

Integration

Application papers that apply important concepts and skills to the student's experience inside or outside the classroom. They might focus on analyzing communication competence in specific situations, applying listening and response skills, examining nonverbal events/cues, analyzing the development of group roles, rules, and norms. At least one such paper will involve examining the impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion on marginalized populations and engaging in creative problem-solving and critical thinking. All papers will be assessed based on the inclusion and development of relevant concepts as well as standard grammar, syntax and spelling.

DE Adaptations for MOE

Application papers will be submitted via the CMS. The instructor will provide comments and grades within two weeks of the due date of these papers within the grade book using a rubric with written feedback options within the CMS.

Method

Projects

Integration

Group or individual research project and presentation related to concepts and skills developed throughout the course. The students will be evaluated on how well they can develop, problem-solve, analyze, and interact with others. "The difficult group member" is often a challenge in group work thus an examination of the difficult group member and various methods of mitigating such challenges.

DE Adaptations for MOE

Students will be divided into groups using the CMS group feature and scheduled to speak during synchronous and/or asynchronous online format. Presentations can be submitted via the CMS or delivered with appropriate video-conferencing software and instructor feedback will be given in the gradebook within CMS using rubric and written feedback options.

Assignments**Assignment Type**

Writing

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Journal assignment: Choose one recent meeting of a group inside or outside the class. Describe the leadership behavior. Analyze the leadership needs based on the course materials. Additionally, make note of and analyze the effectiveness of any DEI efforts. You will be assessed on the basis of completeness, accuracy, and applicability.

How assignment will be adapted in online format

Select journal pages will be submitted via the CMS. The instructor will provide comments and grades within two weeks of the due date of these pages within the grade book using a rubric with written feedback options within the CMS.

Assignment Type

Writing

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Application Paper: Group System Analysis. Analyze the system of a group to which you belong, using a model discussed in class. A task group would be best, but a social group (such as your family) is acceptable. Write a paper that includes the following: Describe the group and how you got involved. Describe important input, throughput, and output variables of the system. Discuss your level of satisfaction with the group goals, processes, and outcomes. If none are evident describe how marginalized populations could be effectively included. If evident how effectively are such populations included? You will be assessed on the basis of completeness, accuracy, and applicability.

How assignment will be adapted in online format

Application papers (described above) will be submitted via the CMS. The instructor will provide comments and grades within two weeks of the due date of these papers within the grade book using a rubric with written feedback options within the CMS.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Group project:

You will be assigned to Symposium Groups wherein they will analyze a specified topic (from either the instructor or derived from group discussion). You will conduct research, develop a presentation, and deliver said presentation. Minutes of each meeting will be recorded and presented to the instructor at the time of delivery. You will be evaluated on interaction, creativity, and efforts toward inclusivity. This will result in a group grade. The group will be assessed on the basis of completeness, accuracy, and applicability.

How assignment will be adapted in online format

Using the CMS students will be assigned to Symposium Groups wherein they will analyze a specified topic (from either the instructor or derived from group discussion). Students will conduct research, develop a presentation, and deliver said presentation using the CMS. Minutes of each meeting will be recorded and presented to the instructor using the CMS just prior to the time of delivery.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Summative

Assignment

Group project:

You will be placed in groups during the last third of the semester to complete a major problem-solving activity. Your group will engage in a problem census, choose a realistic problem for which multiple solutions can be proposed, analyze the problem using outside information sources, evaluate and rank solutions, and implement a solution, either by preparing a group report or some type of tangible model or product. Issues of inclusivity and marginalized populations should be included. The use of multimedia is encouraged. An agenda and a record of each group project meeting (minutes) should be created, duplicated, and distributed in a timely fashion to the members and the instructor as the group proceeds through the task. Your group will make a final presentation to the class. It should analyze the goals and problems faced by the group, describe its efforts and results, and discuss what the members of the group learned about small group communication from this experience. Any efforts toward intentional inclusivity should be noted and any challenges to incorporating this should be explained. Your group will prepare a written final report or tangible model or product, which summarizes or displays the activities and results. The quality of a concrete product will be evaluated instead of a paper. Each student who fully participates will receive the group grade for each of the components. Your student/group will be assessed on the basis of completeness, accuracy, and applicability.

How assignment will be adapted in online format

You will be assigned to groups as shown above wherein your group will analyze a major problem-solving activity using the CMS. Your group will engage in a problem census, choose a realistic problem for which multiple solutions can be proposed, analyze the problem using outside information sources, evaluate and rank solutions, and implement a solution, either by preparing a group report or some

type of tangible model or product to be delivered through the CMS. Groups will be evaluated on interaction, creativity, and efforts toward inclusivity. This will result in a group grade.

Assignment Type

Reading

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Working in groups of three to five people, read chapters six through eight of the book, "Getting to Yes" by Fisher and Ury. They will then select three of the principles found in these chapters to apply to a conflict in a small group setting. Groups will then seek consensus on which would be the best to use to manage the aforementioned conflict and will present their results to the class. The group response will be assessed on the basis of completeness, accuracy, and applicability.

How assignment will be adapted in online format

Discussion groups will be formed and students will select three of the principles found in these chapters to apply to a conflict in a small group setting. Using the CMS groups will then seek consensus on which would be the best to use to manage the aforementioned conflict and will present their results to class via the CMS. The instructor will provide comments and grades within two weeks of the due date of these pages within the grade book using a rubric with written feedback options within the CMS.

Assignment Type

Reading

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Read the book "Stamped from the Beginning" by Ibrahim X. Kendi. Then consider how racist ideas and beliefs of the dominant population may influence members of marginalized populations in group settings. Craft three potential resolutions or effective ways of addressing such racist ideas and beliefs. A final three to five-page report will be submitted to the instructor for grading. You will be assessed on the basis of completeness, accuracy, and applicability.

How assignment will be adapted in online format

The CMS will be used to form groups of three to five students for discussion purposes. Students will then craft three potential resolutions or effective ways of addressing such racist ideas and beliefs. A final three to five-page report will be submitted by the group to the instructor for grading through the CMS. This will result in a group grade.

Course Materials**Textbooks**

Adams, K., Galanes, G. and Hoelscher, C. (2021). Communicating in groups: Applications and skills McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 9781260253894

Beebe, Steven & Masterson, John (2020). Communication in small groups: Principles and practices Allyn & Bacon. ISBN: 9780135712160

Rothwell, J.D. (2022). In mixed company: Communicating in small groups and teams. Oxford University Publishing. ISBN: 9780197602812

Open Educational Resources

Linabury, R., Moon, C., (2021). Small Group Communication: Forming and Sustaining Teams. Pressbooks.

Class Size Information

Class Size

30

Class Size Category

D - Individualized instruction/group learning/student presentations 30

Diversity and Inclusion

Course Design and Materials: Course will incorporate diverse perspectives, authors, and examples that reflect a variety of cultures, identities, and lived experiences. Instructional materials will be reviewed regularly to ensure representation, inclusivity, and alignment with equity-minded practices across disciplines.

Inclusive Learning Environment: Instructors will establish classroom norms and policies that promote respect, civil discourse, and belonging in both online and face-to-face classes. Clear expectations for communication and engagement will support a learning space where all students feel valued and heard.

Accessible Instruction: Course content will be delivered using accessible design. Materials will follow accessibility guidelines within the CMS, including captioned media, readable document formats, and multiple means of engagement to support diverse learning.

Equitable Teaching Practices: Instructors will use transparent and grading criteria, varied assessment methods, and timely feedback to promote fairness and student success. Opportunities for revision, reflection, and multiple demonstrations of learning may be incorporated when appropriate to the discipline.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogies: Instructional strategies will encourage critical thinking about diverse perspectives and systems of power relevant to the course content. Faculty will foster opportunities for students to connect course material to real-world contexts.

Ongoing Reflection and Improvement: Faculty will engage in continuous professional development related to IDEAA principles and reflect on course practices using metacognition to identify opportunities for increased equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Explain how diversity and inclusion(e.g., gender, culture/race, sexuality, etc.) is infused into the course.

Effective communication, especially in a group environment, requires introspection for the purpose of examining one's own biases, attitudes, and behaviors. The study of the intersection of communication and culture provides a rich opportunity to learn about, and thus respect diverse perspectives—perspectives other than one's own. Since one's attitudes influence their behavior self-examination becomes a prerequisite for growth. It is important to examine our attitudes toward those who we see as being different, in regards to people of color, sexual orientation, and members of other marginalized populations.

Describe how assignments, instruction, evaluation, course content, and interactions are contextualized for diverse learners promoting an equitable course.

Small Group Communication uses a plethora of instructional methods, assessments, and assignments to appeal to diverse learning styles which then allow students to demonstrate what they have learned. The variety of methods used support a broad array of learning styles, increasing accessibility and engagement among students. Interspersing these various instructional methods among lecture and activities enables student learning by appealing to a broad variety of learning styles. Instruction will incorporate culturally relevant course materials using both formative and summative assignments with an emphasis on scaffolding to enable students to gain familiarity and confidence. Theories, concepts, fallacies, and activities will be analyzed and applied through the lens of academic texts.

Interactions

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-student interaction.

This course facilitates student-to-student interaction through in-class interactive discussions and collaborative student activities and assignments outside of class. Students will analyze, discuss, and critique research related to small group communication and concepts such as "the difficult group member," ineffective decision-making, group formation, and dimensions of power, among others. Instructional methods, activities, and assignments will encourage group activities that allow for collaborative discussion, group

analyses, and application of concepts, theories, and central themes related to the discipline. Discussions and group activities are expected to foster community and encourage student connection with the material and one another. Group discussions will be utilized in the CMS as needed.

Explain how the course will incorporate instructor-to-student interaction.

The course will utilize an active learning environment to promote critical thinking and help students develop a more accurate understanding of small group concepts. In addition to providing lectures that deliver content to students, instructors will also serve as a facilitators for the students to expand their understanding and analysis of the content and guide group discussions and various class activities that offer students experiential learning. The instructor will also guide the students through group projects, providing input as necessary in order to scaffold the comprehension of the content. Student led groups will be facilitated by the instructor to stimulate discussion and encourage understanding of key concepts, readings, research, project development and delivery, ultimately aimed at leading to effective communication. Using the course CMS discussion forums, breakout rooms in video-conferencing software, and/or in-class, the instructor will participate in class discussions.

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-content interaction.

Student-to-content interaction will be achieved through activities, discussions, and group work through experiential learning. Students will also interact with the content through activities directly related to small-group communication. Class and homework activities will contribute to the students' learning as they apply the course learning concepts, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills in a safe, real-world context which may include fellow students or even possibly family members or friendship groups. Student research and participatory activities will also reflect their comprehension of small-group concepts. The CMS will be used by students to participate in discussions, lectures, and other online activities as necessary. To examine concepts and explore theoretical lenses, the instructor will provide a variety of media and activities for learning. Students will reference accessible and ADA-compliant materials. These may include assigned readings (textbooks, articles, primary sources, etc.), written lecture materials or transcripts of lectures, illustrative images, charts and graphs, video or audio lectures, narrated PowerPoint presentations, embedded or linked multimedia content (such as films, YouTube videos, podcasts, etc.), and student created or curated content. Students could examine how conflict is experienced in small groups inclusive of the role of leadership (and other roles). Students could examine the experiences of marginalized populations via readings or watching a broad variety of media. Students could examine the interplay between power and compassion, bias in the written word, or from multimedia resources to gain a deeper, nuanced, and more complete understanding of these and other related concepts.

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-self interaction (metacognitive).

Student-to-self interaction will be achieved through the use of in-class and online discussions for both face-to-face and online courses. Students will be expected to write their thoughts first before sharing them in small-group discussions. Additionally, reflection activities will be utilized to help students consider their understanding of the material, themselves, their learning processes (and how such experiences are affected in group discussions), and their diversity of experiences. Students may be encouraged to reflect and thus take a deeper understanding of the concepts under examination including how their beliefs developed.