

University of Mary Washington: Fall 2019
SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION: COMM 206
Section 01: T/Th, 9:30-10:45AM Section 02: 12:30-1:45PM

Instructor: Dr. Elizabeth Johnson-Young
she/her/hers

Email: ejohnso6@umw.edu

Office: COMBS 314

Student Hours: Mondays: 12:00-2:00PM
 Tuesdays: 2:00-3:00PM
 Wednesdays: 12:00-1:00PM
 Thursdays: 2:00-3:00PM (2nd floor of UC)
 And by appointment (in person or virtually)

Course Catalog Description

Study of the theories and principles of effective communication and decision making in small group contexts. Emphasis is on understanding communication dynamics and on improving one's communication capabilities as a participant in and leader of small groups.

Course designations: Speaking Intensive; Community Engagement

Syllabus Purpose: Our syllabus should provide us with clear expectations of the semester and what our goals will be for the course, as well as how I envision us reaching those goals. I also see the syllabus as a living document that we can reassess together as needed.

Learning Outcomes:

Throughout the semester, students will:

1. Become familiar with basic research and concepts surrounding small group communication
2. Practice facilitating small group discussions and deliberations
3. Apply conceptual ideas about effective group discussion techniques to practical communication situations.
4. To develop communication competence in small group and team settings
5. Demonstrate an understanding and awareness of the role that communication plays in decision making groups in multiple contexts, including school, workplace, home life, and the democratic process
6. Present polished recommendations and discussions using rhetorical principles and demonstrating ethical and socially responsible public speaking practices.
7. Analyze and demonstrate how group communication concepts manifest in various digital environments.

Required Text and Materials

1. Rothwell, J. D. (2016). *In mixed company* (9th Ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage. ISBN: 978-1-285-44460-4
2. Additional readings will be available on Canvas or through the library.

Canvas—We will regularly use our course Canvas site for additional documents, reminders, discussion, other communications and, at times, assignment submissions. Please ensure you have access to the site and that you are prepared to check it on a regular basis.

Use of the Speaking Center: As this is a Speaking Intensive course, you will be expected to present your work. The Speaking Center is a great resource for you and/or your group as you prepare to present. Although it is not required, a small amount of extra credit will be applied for one of your visits, either for your discussion facilitation or one of the group presentations.

Community Outreach—As a CE designated course, a major part of our class will be working within the community on a particular issue. You will be expected to reach out to community members, visit with and interview community members, and attend any relevant community events.

Community Engagement

This course is designated as a CE course.

For the CE designation, courses must include an out-of-class experience which involves at least *15 hours of work*.*

All CE designated courses must meet the following four outcomes:

- **Diversity of Communities/Cultures:** Demonstrates evidence of adjustment in own attitudes and beliefs because of working within and learning from diversity of communities and cultures. Promotes others' engagement with diversity.
- **Analysis of Knowledge:** Connects and extends knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/ field/ discipline to community engagement and to one's own participation in community life, politics, and government.
- **Identity/Commitment:** Provides evidence of experience in community-engagement activities and describes what she/he has learned about her or himself as it relates to a reinforced and clarified sense of one's identity and continued commitment to public action.
- **Action and Reflection:** Demonstrates independent experience, accompanied by reflective insights or analysis about the aims and accomplishments of one's actions.

Additional Outcome for our course:

- **Communication:** Tailors communication strategies to effectively express, listen, and adapt to others to establish relationships to further community action

** Please note that for our class, some of this time will be designated during course time and others outside of this time.*

Major Graded Assignments:

- 1. Reading Cards (10%):** Several times during the semester, you'll need to bring a note card to class with the following: 2 questions for each reading (we'll talk about expectations), a discussion point (something you'd like to talk about more, a way to apply it to the workplace or to your own project, how an idea or concept might work to help communities or government approach issues, etc.), and 2 new-to-you terms/concepts/theories with their definitions.
- 2. Project Proposal Public Deliberation (15%):** Your group will need to identify and propose an agenda and plan for your final project. This will be in both written form and in the form of an oral group presentation to propose your plans. Preliminary research and reaching out in the community will be required prior to turning in and presenting the proposed project.
- 3. Final Group Project and Presentation (30%):** For your final project, your group will complete a project with a local group and/or local community at large. Your main tasks will be to identify a problem within the community, research the problem, come to a group consensus about how to solve the specific problem you land on, and follow through with some of the action required. Your group will present your final project in class. More details will be available in the assignment description.
- 4. Group Examination (15%):** Later in the semester, students will take a comprehensive and collaborative exam. This means that students will work together to complete the in-class exam, but each student will also be held accountable through an individual portion.
- 5. Contributions to Community/Discussion and Discussion Facilitating (30%):** The nature of this course requires active class participation. During the semester, each student will facilitate a small group discussion regarding the readings with the goal of consensus regarding the problem(s) identified in the readings. Students are also expected to actively participate in class discussion, small group discussions, and any online/group discussions in order to enhance our conversations.

Grading:

Grading Scale:

A 92.5-100	B 82.5-86.49	C 72.5-76.49	D 62.5-66.49
A- 89.5-92.49	B- 79.5-82.49	C- 69.5-72.49	D- 59.5-62.49
B+ 86.5-89.49	C+ 76.5-79.49	D+ 66.5-69.49	F 0-59.49

Support

Basic Needs and Well-Being

Learning effectively and engaging wholly in class is dependent upon our basic security and needs: a shelter, having a safe place to sleep at night, regular access to nutritious food. If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every

day, or if you lack a safe and stable place to live, and you believe this may affect your performance in this course, please contact Cedric Rucker, Dean of Student Life, for support. Additionally, please talk to me if you are comfortable doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources I may possess.

Title IX

University of Mary Washington faculty are committed to supporting students and upholding the University's *Policy on Sexual and Gender Based Harassment and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence*. Under Title IX and this Policy, discrimination based upon sex or gender is prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex or gender based discrimination, we encourage you to report it. ***While you may talk to me, understand that as a "Responsible Employee" of the University, I MUST report to UMW's Title IX Coordinator what you share.*** If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, please contact the below confidential resources. They can connect you with support services and help you explore your options. You may also seek assistance from UMW's Title IX Coordinator. Please visit <http://diversity.umw.edu/title-ix/> to view UMW's *Policy on Sexual and Gender Based Harassment and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence* and to find further information on support and resources.

Resources

Tiffany W. Oldfield, J.D.
Title IX Coordinator
Office of Title IX
Fairfax House
540-654-5656
toldfiel@umw.edu

Myranda Thomson
Title IX Deputy for Students
Area Coordinator
540-654-1184
mthomson@umw.edu

Confidential Resources

On-Campus
Talley Center for Counselling Services –
Lee Hall 106

Student Health Center
Lee Hall 112

Off Campus
Empowerhouse: 540-373-9373

RCASA: 540-371-1666

Accommodations for Disabilities:

The Office of Disability Resources has been designated by the college as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through the Office of Disability Resources and require accommodations for this class, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. I will hold any information you share with me in confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you have not made contact with the Office of Disability Resources and have reasonable accommodation needs, (note taking assistance, extended time for tests, etc.), I will be happy to refer you.

Classroom Recording

Classroom activities in this course may be recorded by students enrolled in the course for the personal, educational use of that student or for all students presently enrolled in the class only, and may not be further copied, distributed, published or otherwise used for any other purpose without the express written consent of the course instructor. All students are advised that classroom activities may be taped by students for this purpose. Distribution or sale of class recordings is prohibited without the written permission of the instructor and other students who are recorded. Distribution without permission is a violation of copyright law. This policy is consistent with UMW's [Policy on Recording Class and Distribution of Course Materials](#).

Course Expectations and Policies

Late Assignments and Make-Up Work

My general policy is this: We need to be in class to succeed and to stay on track with expectations. We need to be in class to create community and to hear a diversity of ideas—when someone is missing, we miss that voice. That being said, life happens-- stay in touch with me and communicate regarding any issues that arise in your successful completion of the course, including attendance and getting your work completed.

Specifics of late assignments, make up work, and attendance are below:

All work should be submitted prior to the date and time it is due to be considered on time. Make-up work and late work, including presentations will *only be accepted for excused absences*. If this occurs, students should expect to submit all work that is due one class session *prior* to an anticipated absence or on the first day you return to class following an emergency absence. Please do not email assignments to me unless we have arranged that in advance.

If you miss an activity, deliberation, or presentation due to an emergency/unanticipated absence, please contact the instructor as soon as you are able in order to make arrangements appropriate to your situation.

Attendance Expectations

Attendance

Due to the participatory nature of COMM 206 it is imperative that you attend class in order to observe and participate. You cannot expect to succeed in the course without attending, as you cannot participate without being present and you cannot turn in late assignments. Further, presentations must be given in front of your classroom audience in order to earn credit for them. If you are not present for a group presentation, your group will be expected to present without you.

Absences

If you have an excused absence, you are responsible for making up work in the manner described above in the syllabus. Generally, two kinds of excused absences are considered:

1. *Anticipated absences* (e.g., participating in an official university function, court attendance, religious observances, or military duty). Please let me know in advance. Generally, this does NOT include absences such as leaving early for break or travel.
2. *Emergency absences*. Please contact me when you are able to make arrangements as necessary.

Classroom Community Expectations

On presentation and facilitation/deliberation days you must be present the entire period. If you arrive late on a presentation day, please wait until you hear applause to enter the room. Please do not exit the classroom, do other class work, or use electronic devices during presentations.

We will be presenting and listening to many different topics this semester, as well as providing feedback on each other's work. Although we want to challenge each other intellectually, it is also expected that we will be respectful of each other and our ideas in the classroom in our language and nonverbal behaviors.

We will brainstorm more ideas for this section in class together

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to fully adhere to the academic honor code of the university. You are expected to produce your own work and cite sources when appropriate. You must still cite when presenting work orally! You will be expected to sign the honor code on all work. Please visit the links below for more:

<http://students.umw.edu/fredericksburghonorcouncil/honor-pledge/>
<http://students.umw.edu/fredericksburghonorcouncil/guidebook-and-constitution/>

Assessment Questions and Concerns:

I am always happy to discuss grades and to talk about ways to improve. In order to have productive conversations regarding grades, please adhere to the following:

1. Wait 24 hours after an assignment is returned*;
2. Come to student hours to discuss without rushing between classes

* After one week, assignment grades are final and cannot be disputed. This is for your benefit, as well as mine—we need assignments to be fresh in our mind to discuss them productively. Waiting longer than a week may no longer be productive.

Technology:

Please do not use electronic devices during student presentations or student led discussions, unless the speaker requests relevant use. Otherwise, please feel free to use your devices for notes, access to the text, etc. Please be mindful of distracting others in class if you choose to do something else.

Non-Discrimination Policy:

UMW's policies and regulations covering discrimination, harassment, and retaliation may be accessed at

<http://diversity.umw.edu/bias/support-and-resources/statement-of-nondiscrimination/>

Course Calendar*

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment/Materials
1	Aug 27	Introduction to Course; Ice Breaker 1	Syllabus and Calendar
	Aug 29	Ice Breaker 2 Basics of Communication	Chapter 1
2	Sep 3	Small Group as...	Skim Chapter 2; Gastil (1993)
	Sep 5	Group Development and Process	Chapter 3
3	Sep 10	Discussion of Larger Group Project and Proposal	<i>"Wicked Problems" reading on Canvas; Assignment Descriptions (proposal and larger group project)</i>
	Sep 12	<i>Small Group Discussions and Deliberations #1: The Role of Small Groups in Society</i>	6 discussion groups (Readings on Canvas)
4	Sep 17	The Small Group Climate <i>Discussion of Group Norms Contracts</i>	Chapter 4 Spiral of Silence Reading (on Canvas)
	Sep 19	Roles and Leadership	Chapter 5
5	Sep 24	<i>Group Public Deliberations and Proposals</i>	
	Sep 26	<i>Group Norms Contracts Due</i>	
6	Oct 1	Roles and Leadership	Chapters 6 Discussion of final proposal
	Oct 3	<i>Small Group Discussions and Deliberations #2: Taking on Modern Day Issues with "Group Think" and the Spiral of Silence</i> *Final Proposal Due (one page, outline form)	6 discussion groups (Readings on Canvas)
7	Oct 8	Developing Effective Groups and Teams	Chapter 7
	Oct 10	Decision Making in Small Groups	Chapter 8
8	Oct 15	<i>NO CLASS—FALL BREAK</i>	
	Oct 17	Decision Making in Small Groups	Chapter 9
9	Oct 22	<i>Small Group Discussions and Deliberations #3: Goals of Deliberation</i>	6 discussion groups (Readings on Canvas)
	Oct 24	<i>Time in community for interviewing, research, discussion</i>	
10	Oct 29	Power Issues in Small Groups <i>Discuss feedback on proposals</i>	Chapter 10

	Oct 31	Gender, Race, and Small Group Communication	3 readings online
11	Nov 5	<i>Small Group Discussions and Deliberations #4: Power, Bias, and Communication</i>	6 discussion groups (Readings on Canvas)
	Nov 7	Review and Catch Up	
12	Nov 12	Group Exam	
	Nov 14	Professor Away at Conference-- Outside work to interview and discuss in community	Reports of update work to be turned in on Canvas
13	Nov 19	Conflict: A Necessary Management Function and the possibility of small groups resolving conflict	Chapter 11 Canvas Readings
	Nov 21	Catch up Day in Class Discussion of Digital Groups <i>Tentative Skype Discussion</i>	
14	Nov 26	Outside work with group to plan and execute final project	<i>Report back to Professor</i>
	Nov 28	No Class-Thanksgiving Holiday	
15	Dec 3	Projects Due in Class on Tuesday	
	Dec 5	Presentations This Week	

* Course calendar is subject to change as necessary.