

SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY
COMM 2333-01:
Discussion and Small Group Communication

Spring 2025
11:00 am – 12:15 pm Mon/Wed
Briscoe Admin Building, Room 305
Office hours
Tues/Thurs 2:00 – 3:00 pm
All other times by appointment

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THE BASICS

Course Description

This course is designed to facilitate students' learning of the theory and practice of small group communication. Through lectures, discussions, readings, exercises, and assignments, we will investigate several concepts related to group and team communication. Topics related to groups and teams include systems, norms, roles, cohesiveness and groupthink, group development and team evolution, diversity, verbal, and nonverbal communication, listening and feedback, decision making and problem solving, creativity, conflict management, and leadership.

The format of the course is designed so that you will have the opportunity to develop and practice your group communication skills. The goal is to provide you with new perspectives on the process of small group communication, as well as discovering a variety of ways to communicate effectively in small groups. You will take part in class discussion, student-facilitated discussion, group interaction and projects/presentations, lectures, and individual assignments.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the processes and complexities of interacting in a variety of small groups
- Identify your own and others' communication behaviors and their effects on a small group dynamic
- Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze interactions within small groups
- Identify the potential constraints and barriers to small group effectiveness
- Demonstrate constructive feedback to peers in small groups and teams
- Facilitate small group discussions effectively
- Demonstrate competence in research and application of theory to small group interactions

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

This course is designed to meet one or more of the following Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO 1: Students will be able to analyze communication content for argument, including identification of major elements, such as claim, warrants, and data.

SLO 2: Students will be able to effectively construct messages appropriate to audience, purpose, and context; including electronic media technologies.

SLO 3: Students will be able to apply Communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts to the analysis of communication situations.

Marketable Skills

Students who major in Communication will graduate having developed the following skills:

1. Informative and Persuasive Speaking
2. Audience-centered Writing
3. Critical Analysis
4. Research
5. Effective Message Construction Using Technology

Required Reading

- Beebe, S.A., & Masterson, J.T. (2015). *Communicating in Small Groups: Principles and Practices, 11th edition*. Pearson Publishing Boston. ISBN-13: 978-0-205-98083-3
- Throughout the semester, supplemental readings are assigned. These readings are posted to Blackboard in the Readings tab.

THE RULES

- 1) Arrive on time and prepared for class.
- 2) Behave with academic integrity and honesty.
- 3) Complete and submit all assignments on or before the due date.
- 4) Obtain missed class notes, assignment information, and course materials from classmates.
Do not ask me what you missed.
- 5) Recognize and accept the consequences of your actions and choices.
- 6) Actively participate in each class meeting. If you play on your phone, study for another class, or disrespect others, you will be asked to leave and marked absent for the day.
- 7) Treat members of the class with the respect and dignity.
- 8) Audio or video recording of any class session without my prior approval is strictly prohibited and all electronic devices must be turned OFF and PUT AWAY during class.

Study time

Most college courses require that students spend a significant amount of time outside of class in individual study time. A typical guideline is to spend two hours per week for every class hour. This means, in a 3-credit course, six hours of outside study per week would be expected. The actual in-class meeting time is short in college courses because it is expected that students can and will work independently outside of class to meet the requirements of the course.

Freedom of Expression

You are strongly encouraged to participate in class. In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical thinking, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. These differences enhance the learning experience and create an atmosphere where students and instructors alike will be encouraged to think and learn. On sensitive and volatile topics, students may sometimes disagree not only with each other but also with the instructor. It is expected that faculty and students will respect the views of others when expressed in classroom discussions.

Class Attendance and Participation

You are expected to attend class and participate. This means engage with others and bring your curiosity to the table. Your participation grade will be based on attendance, completion of in-class exercises, and discussions. Just being in the classroom does not satisfy the participation requirement of this course. You are expected to be actively involved in activities and discussions and show an active interest in course content. **Arriving late to class or leaving early (unless otherwise arranged with the me) will be counted as an absence for the entire class period.**

Excused absences from class include: a university event for which you are required to attend, religious holidays, an illness (a doctor's note must be submitted to the instructor), a death in the family (an obituary or funeral program must be submitted), or court dates (an official notice from the court must be submitted). If you miss a project deadline or presentation due to illness you must provide written documentation from the Health Center (or an outside health care provider), verifying dates of treatment and the time-period during which you were unable to meet academic responsibilities. **All other absences will be marked as unexcused.**

Per university policy, if you accrue 6 unexcused absences, you will be dropped from the course with an "F."

THE WORK

Reading

There will be reading assigned each week for this class (see course calendar). Keep up with the assigned readings and fully take part in class discussion, as readings and concepts discussed in class build upon and connect to previous days. Participation and attendance are part of your grade, so you should complete every assigned reading *before* class and come to class prepared to ask questions, discuss the material, and engage in classroom activities.

Quizzes

There will be three quizzes throughout the semester. These quizzes will cover textbook readings and classroom discussions. The quizzes are a diagnostic tool to help me see if and how well you are understanding the concepts covered in class.

Group Assignments

You will be working in groups for much of the semester. Group assignments will be arbitrary, and changes to these assignments will not be permitted. You will have the opportunity to be part of multiple small groups this semester, which will help you learn to adapt to different group dynamics if you remain open to learning. If you experience any difficulty in your group at any time, my involvement as the instructor will be to listen and provide guidance. **However, it is your responsibility to: 1) maintain a sense of cohesion and balance within the group and 2) to resolve conflicts or problems so you and your colleagues may complete your assigned tasks throughout the semester.** Groups usually find that the sooner they address growing problems, the easier it is to resolve them in a professional manner. In other words, don't wait until the end of the semester to address any persistent issues.

Group Presentations

There will be three major group presentations throughout the semester. You and your group will receive a problem to solve and **as a group**, you will brainstorm, research, discuss, and devise solutions to these problems. Each group will give to the rest of the class a presentation of their proposed solutions. Presentation #2 counts as the midterm for this class. Presentation #3 counts as the final.

NOTE: You will be given time during regular class meetings to work with your group. **However, you will also need to meet with your group outside of class to complete assignments.** Missing group meetings during and outside of class will negatively affect your group participation evaluation. I strongly suggest you make sure you will be able to faithfully attend class and actively participate in group meetings during/outside of class for the duration of the semester. **If your work/personal schedule conflicts with class attendance and your participation in the group outside of class, you should reconsider taking this class at this time. Your group members depend on you!**

Class Activities

Throughout the semester, we will also engage in discussions and exercises as a class rather than in your small groups. Your enthusiastic participation is required in all class discussions and exercises.

Reflection Paper

Reflecting on your experience and outcome is an important component of learning as it will help you improve going forward. Therefore, you are required to write and submit a reflection paper detailing your experience working in groups throughout the semester. Format and assignment details for this paper posted to Blackboard. **Reflection papers are due in class on Tuesday, May 7 at 10:15 am (the day and time of our final).**

THE GRADES

The point-values for the assignments in this class are as follows:

Group Project #1	100
Group Project #2	200
Group Project #3 (Final)	300
Quizzes (3 at 50 points each)	150
Class Discussion & Exercises	150
Reflection Paper	100
TOTAL	1000

THE RESOURCES

ADA

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Any student who because of a disability, may require special arrangements to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary arrangements. If an accommodation is needed, students must present their accommodation letter, obtained from Accessibility Services, as soon as possible. Please note that instructors are not permitted to provide classroom accommodations to a student until the appropriate verification has been received. Counseling and Accessibility Services is in Ferguson Hall, Suite 112. You can make an appointment by calling Mary Schwartz Grisham at 432-837-8203 or via email mschwartz@sulross.edu. The mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

SRSU Library Services: The Sul Ross Library offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website: <https://library.sulross.edu>

Off-campus access requires your Lobo ID and password. Check out materials using your photo ID. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email at rsulibrary@sulross.edu or phone 432-837-8123.

Online Support Desk: SRSU now has a Blackboard support desk for all students. If you are having issues submitting a document, getting videos to play, or you are dealing with a technical error in the course. The support desk is open 24 hours a day 7 days a week. You can contact the support desk by:

- Calling 888-837-6055
- Email: blackboardsupport@sulross.edu
- Using resources from the Technology Support tab within Blackboard and selecting the Support Desk graphic on the course homepage

For questions about course assignments, due dates, and policies pertaining to this course, please ask me.

(SEE COURSE CALENDAR ON NEXT PAGE)

COURSE CALENDAR

The dates and topics on the following calendar are subject to change at instructor's discretion.

DATE	TOPIC	READING DUE	ASSIGNMENT DUE
Wed, Jan 17	Review syllabus and course expectations		
Mon, Jan 22	Discuss Chapter 1	Chapter 1: Introducing Group Principles & Practices	
Wed Jan 24	Continue discussing Chapter 1 Class Exercise		
Mon Jan 29	Discuss Chapter 2	Chapter 2: Understanding Small Group Communication Theory	
Wed Jan 31	Discuss Chapter 3	Chapter 3: Facilitating Group Development	
Mon, Feb 5	Discuss Chapter 3 In-class exercise		
Wed, Feb 7	Discuss Chapter 4	Chapter 4: Preparing to Collaborate	
Mon, Feb 12	Discuss Chapter 4 In-class exercise		Test #1 on Chapters 1-3 due on Blackboard
Wed, Feb 14	Discuss Chapter 5	Chapter 5: Relating to Others in Groups	
Mon, Feb 19	Discuss Chapter 5 In-class exercise		
Wed Feb 21	Group Presentation #1		
Mon, Feb 26	Discuss Chapter 6	Chapter 6: Improving Group Climate	
Wed, Feb 28	Discuss Chapter 6 In-class exercise		
Mon, March 4	Discuss Chapter 7 Group Work in Class	Chapter 7: Enhancing Communication Skills in Groups	
Wed, March 6	Discuss Chapter 7 In-class exercise		
Mon, March 11	Spring Break		

Wed, March 13	Spring Break		
Mon, March 18	Group work in class		
Wed, March 20	Group Presentation #2 (midterm)		
Mon, March 25	Discuss Chapter 8	Chapter 8: Managing Conflict	
Wed, March 27	Discuss Chapter 8 In-class exercise		Test #2 on Chapters 4-8 on Blackboard due
Mon, April 1	Discuss Chapter 9	Chapter 9: Leading Groups	
Wed, April 3	Discuss Chapter 9 In-class exercise		
Mon, April 8	Discuss Chapter 10	Chapter 10: Making Decisions and Solving Problems	
Wed, April 10	Continue discussing Chapter 10 In-class exercise		
Mon, April 15	Discuss Chapter 11	Chapter 11: Using Problem-Solving Techniques	
Wed, April 17	Discuss Chapter 11 In-class exercise		
Mon, April 22	Discuss Chapter 12		
Wed, April 24	Discuss Chapter 12 In-class exercise		
Mon, April 29	Group Work in class		Test #3 on Chapters 9 – 12 due on Blackboard
Wed, May 1	Last day of class - TBD		
Tuesday, May 7	FINAL 10:15 am – 12:15 pm. Final Group Presentations. Reflection papers due.		