

COM 373: COMMUNICATION IN SMALL GROUPS

MGH 241, MON/WED 9:30-11:20PM

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Course Summary

This course reviews recent theory and research on small group communication and relates these writings to your own experiences in small groups. Topics covered include group formation, leadership, conflict, problem analysis, groupthink, decision rules, group procedures, democratic group behavior, and more. The course's primary objective is to teach you to think critically about how you and others behave in groups, thereby improving the experiences you (and your fellow group-mates) have throughout your life. After completing the course, you should have an integrated knowledge of contemporary theories of small group behavior, and you should better understand the relationship between theorizing about small groups and how you manage your own participation in them.

Assignments and Grading

On the first day, the class will choose one of three possible grading systems through networked small group discussions. Whichever system students choose that first day becomes the official one that will be used for the quarter.

<u>Grading System A</u>	<u>Grading System B</u>	<u>Grading System C</u>
Quizzes 10% of grade	Quizzes 15%	Quizzes 5%
Midterm 10%	Midterm 15%	Midterm 10%
Final exam 30%	Final exam 40%	Final exam 20%
Group project 20%	Group project 10%	Group project 30%
Journal assignment 20%	Journal assignment 10%	Journal assignment 25%
Class participation 10%	Class participation 10%	Class participation 10%

- Six quizzes you will complete this quarter test you on basic concepts and ideas introduced in the readings. They are designed to have a steady assessment of what you are learning as the quarter progresses. When calculating final grades, we will drop each person's lowest quiz score.
- The midterm and final exam will include short answer and short essay questions that test your ability to understand key concepts and theories and apply that knowledge.
- The group project will require you to make a research-based presentation on a particular kind of group. You and your fellow group members will be graded based on the quality of (a) the in-class presentation, (b) the group materials you produce, and (c) your critical self-evaluations.
- Nine journal assignments will help you reflect on your experiences in small groups outside of class. Almost every week, you will turn in one-page journal entries—short analyses of a real small group that you participate in (or have participated in) outside of class.
- We will also take overall class participation into consideration when setting final grades. You should attend every one of the scheduled classes unless an emergency prevents you from doing so. Since this course is about small group communication, it is appropriate that you participate in class discussions and in-class group activities.

Required Text

The principal reading for this course is a new book, which is so new that it's at the copy-editing stage—not yet in print. We can obtain our copy at Ram's Copy Shop (4144 University Way NE, 206-632-6630). The packet consists of the book *The Group in Society*, and it is ready for pickup.

Special Equipment Requirement

By the April 1 class session, you also must purchase an Radio Frequency Response Card, which the University Bookstore sells for \$40. The UW has almost standardized this technology, meaning that you may end up needing it for another class at some point. Like a textbook, you can also resell it after the quarter is over.

DSS

If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, 543-8924 (V/TDD). If you have a letter from disabled Student Services indicating that you have a disability requiring academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so that we can discuss the accommodations you might need for class.

Course Schedule

Week/Day	Topic/Task in class	Reading due	Quiz/Assignment due
Week 1: Introduction to Small Groups			
Mar 30	Review details of class syllabus Vote on grading system Confirm registrations	--	--
Apr 1	Lecture/discussion on conceptualizing small groups Discuss potential class journal groups Inaugural use of "clickers"	<i>GIS</i> , preface and chap. 1	Practice quiz
Apr 3	Introductions of journal groups Assignment to project groups		Journal entry 1
Week 2: Small Groups in Society			
Apr 6	Small group inventory exercise Lecture/discussion on the connections between small groups and society	<i>GIS</i> , chap. 2	In-class quiz 1
Apr 8	Identify the key social connections in journal groups		Journal entry 2
Apr 10	Introduction to group project assignment		
Week 3: Group Decision Making			
Apr 13	Jury deliberation exercise Lecture/discussion on the civic impact of jury service	<i>State vs. Mayfield</i> trial summary (website)	
Apr 15	Lecture/discussion on decision making in small groups Explore journal group decision making	<i>GIS</i> , chap. 3	In-class quiz 2 Journal entry 3
Apr 17	Project group meeting 1		

Week/Day	Topic/Task in class	Reading due	Quiz/Assignment due
Week 4: Discussion Procedures			
Apr 20	Group synergy exercise Lecture/discussion on group procedures and structure	<i>GIS</i> , chap. 4	
Apr 22	Explore discussion procedures in journal groups Midterm review		Journal entry 4
Apr 24	Midterm exam		
Week 5: Idea and Information Flows			
Apr 27	Project group meeting 2 (meet on own, at location of group's choosing)		
Apr 29	Brainstorming exercise Lecture/discussion on information and creativity	<i>GIS</i> , chap. 5	
May 1	Discuss group projects		One-page group project outline
Week 6: Team Leadership			
May 4	Leadership/status exercise Lecture/discussion on leadership in small groups	<i>GIS</i> , chap. 6	In-class quiz 3
May 6	Section A presentations Explore leadership and status in journal groups		In-class presentation critiques Journal entry 5
May 8	Leadership analysis	On course website	
Week 7: Group Bonding			
May 11	Group cohesion exercise Lecture/discussion on interpersonal bonds and conflicts in small groups	<i>GIS</i> , chap. 7	In-class quiz 4
May 13	Section B presentations Explore social relationships in journal groups		In-class presentation critiques Journal entry 6
May 15	Social relations analysis	On course website	
Week 8: Social Identity			
May 18	Group identity exercise Lecture/discussion on group identification	<i>GIS</i> , chap. 8	In-class quiz 5
May 20	Section C presentations Explore symbolic behavior in journal groups		In-class presentation critiques Journal entry 7
May 22	Consciousness-raising group discussions	On course website	
Week 9: Learning and Growth in Groups			
May 25	Group learning exercise Lecture/discussion on group learning	<i>GIS</i> , chap. 9	In-class quiz 6
May 27	Section D presentations Explore growth/play in journal groups		In-class presentation critiques Journal entry 8
May 29	Connecting the different small group archetypes, including new ones		In-section group archetype project

Week/Day	Topic/Task in class	Reading due	Quiz/Assignment due
Week 10: The Power of Knowledge			
Jun 1	Discussion on group archetypes: comparing different connections and overlooked archetypes	<i>G/S</i> , chap. 10	Slides from May 29 group archetype projects
Jun 3	Discussion/lecture on embedded system framework Reflections on journal groups as embedded systems		Journal entry 9
Jun 5	Final exam review		Group project write-up and critical reflections

Exam Week

Jun 10 Final exam: 8:30-10:20 MGH 241

Journal assignments (in order by number)

Complete these only after doing the reading for the corresponding week.

1. Describe your journal group in general terms. How large is it? How often does it meet? What kinds of decisions does it make? What are its most important features. (Be sure to protect the anonymity of the group members in your descriptions.)
2. How does the behavior of your journal group reflect the larger organization, community, or society in which the group exists? Give an example of specific group behaviors that illustrate this connection.
3. Who influence whom in your journal group? If you want to persuade someone in the group, what strategies do you deploy? What's the most effective means of influencing *you* in this group?
4. What procedures—formal or informal—does your journal group use to conduct its discussions? When there is a disagreement, how does it reach a final decision?
5. Who are the leaders in your journal group, or is there only one? What kind of leadership style(s) are used in your group? How effective are the leaders in your group?
6. How strong are the personal ties among the members of your journal group? What are the key relational dialectics in your group (see Table 7.1 in *G/S*), and how are they managed?
7. Groups often converge on a set of symbols and self-understandings that define them as a unique group. What are some of the ritual ways of speaking or describing itself that you've witnessed in your journal group? Try to recall the origins of these.
8. Over time, how has your group grown and developed? Reference Table 9.1 in *G/S* and explore how your group's behavior relates to the different developmental stages.
9. Look through the array of concepts in Figure 10.3 and trace one set of concepts that relates to your experience in your journal group. Connect at least four concepts, including a factor that influences your group process, one process and one outcome feature, and a way in which the group outcome, in turn, influences other factors.