

COM 577: Communication in Small Groups

Course Times: T/Th 3:30-5:20, Gould 117

Professor: John Gastil
Office: CMU 331, Phone: 543-4655
Email: jgastil@u.washington.edu
Office hours: Wed 10:30-11:30am, Th 2-3pm

Course Summary & Objectives

In taking this course, you will read books and articles addressing diverse topics in small group communication research, such as structuration, functional theory, democratic decision making, and relational communication in groups. Through reading and class discussion, you will learn some of the substantive findings and new ideas in recent theory and research.

You will also strengthen your research skills and clarify your own long-term research interests through the completion of an individual or joint research project. The emphasis in this course will be on the development of group communication theory, as well as the interplay of theory and research. The course will also teach important lessons about the practice of scholarly writing. We will discuss how to write and submit articles to communication journals (and other social science publications). We will also discuss broader issues about the academic profession.

Assignments and Grading

Seventy percent of your grade will be based upon the quality of a 20-35 page paper that you will write either by yourself or in collaboration with other students during the quarter. Presentations on assigned readings and general participation in class accounts for the remaining 30% of your grade. You should attend every one of the scheduled classes and actively participate in class discussions by asking and answering questions, bringing up concerns or ideas, and carefully listening to what others say during class. You must also do your share of work in any joint project.

Readings

I have assigned three books, all of which are available at the UW bookstore:

- Frey, L. R. (Ed.) (1999). *The handbook of group communication theory and research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Polletta, F. (2002). *Freedom is an endless meeting: Democracy in American social movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The Frey handbook is quite expensive, but it's a still-new hardback handbook—an invaluable resource that didn't exist previously. We are *very* lucky that such a handbook has been written so recently. The Polletta book is a wonderful example of qualitative research methods, and it is also a new addition to the literature on the role of small groups in social movements. With the exception of the first day of class, you are expected to have done all readings before the corresponding class period. It is critical that you not only do the readings but also make notes of issues you wish to bring up in class. Discussions are dreadfully dull if you don't come to class prepared and eager to talk (and listen). To help spark discussion, a student will be assigned to introduce the discussion of each of the articles and some of the chapters assigned.

Research Project

Throughout the quarter, we will be discussing, designing, then executing our joint and individual research projects, each of which will explore a theoretical issue in small group communication. Whether you are doing your research project mostly on your own or in collaboration with other students is up to you and your fellow students. In every case, I will assist you in the design and execution of your research, and we will meet outside of class to discuss the progress of your research. The schedule of activities is as follows:

- Week 1 Overview of the purpose/design of projects
- Week 2-3 Select research topics and questions
- Weeks 4-5 Refine questions and explore relevant literatures
- Week 6-8 Clarify and develop original ideas or research designs
- Week 9-11 Finish writing research papers

We will regularly devote class time to discussing the progress of our ideas and methods. Though we will spend much of our time discussing the readings, part of every class period will involve conversations about our projects. In week 10, you will get a chance to summarize some of your main insights for class and will receive additional feedback.

When complete, your paper will be between 15 and 35 pages in length, including title page, abstract, text, references and any other material (appendices, figures, etc.). Refer to the *APA Publication Manual* for more details on paper composition, but you will also learn much by examining the organization and design of the readings assigned in this course. If appropriate, you will choose an appropriate journal as the target for your research and write a draft cover letter for submission of your manuscript. When writing your paper, you will need to take that journal's particular requirements into account. Ideally, you will find an article in that same journal that is structurally similar to what you have in mind, and you can use it as a template for organizing your own paper.

Part I: Theory and Methods

Week 1

Introduction to the Course (Sept 30)

Gastil, J. (1998). *Codebook for policy group research*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

Sager, K. L., & Gastil, J. (1999). Reaching consensus on consensus: A study of the relationships between individual decision-making styles and use of the consensus decision rule. *Communication Quarterly*, 47, 67-79.

Introduction and History of Field (Oct 2)

Frey, L. R. (1999). Introduction. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research* (pp. ix-xxi). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gouran, D. S. (1999). Communication in groups: The emergence and evolution. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research* (pp. 3-36). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Week 2

An Overview of Different Theories (Oct 7)

- Poole, M. S. (1999). Group communication theory. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research* (pp. 37-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mabry, E. A. (1999). The systems metaphor in group communication. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research* (pp. 71-91). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hirokawa, R. Y., & Johnston, D. D. (1989). Toward a general theory of group decision making: Development of an integrated model. *Small Group Behavior, 20*, 500-523.

Structuration and Synergy (Oct 9)

- Banks, S. P., & Riley, P. (1993). Structuration theory as an ontology for communication research. In S. A. Deetz, *Communication Yearbook 16* (pp. 167-196). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Conrad, C. (1993). Rhetorical/communication theory as an ontology for structuration research. In S. A. Deetz, *Communication Yearbook 16* (pp. 197-208). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Salazar, A. J. (1995). Understanding the synergistic effects of communication in small groups. *Small Group Research, 26*, 169-199.

Week 3

Quantitative Approaches (Oct 14)

- Poole, M. S., Keyton, J., & Frey, L. R. (1999). Group communication methodology: Issues and considerations. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research* (pp. 92-112). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Weingart, L. R. (1997). How did they do that? The ways and means of studying group process. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 19*, 189-239.
- Gastil, J., & Sawyer, J. K. (2003, September). *When process matters: An exploration of different operationalizations of public deliberation*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

Ethnographic and Case Study Approaches (Oct 16)

- Dollar, N. J., & Merrigan, G. M. (2002). Ethnographic practices in group communication research. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *New directions in group communication* (pp. 59-78). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Levine, J. P. (1996). The case study as a jury research methodology. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 24*, 351-360.
- Tetlock, P. E., Peterson, R. S., McGuire, C., Chang, S., & Feld, P. (1992). Assessing political group dynamics: A test of the groupthink model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63*, 403-425.

Part II: Decision Making and Juries

Week 4

Decision Making and Group Procedures (Oct 21)

- Hirokawa, R. Y., & Salazar, A. J. (1999). Task-group communication and decision-making performance. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research* (pp. 167-191). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sunwolf & Seibold, D. R. (1999). The impact of formal procedures on group processes, members, and task outcomes. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research* (pp. 395-431). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pavitt, C. (1993). Does communication matter in social influence during small group discussion? Five positions. *Communication Studies*, 44, 216-227.
- Burleson, B. R., Levine, B. J., & Samter, W. (1984). Decision-making procedure and decision quality. *Human Communication Research*, 10, 557-574.
- Meyers, R. A., & Brashers, D. E. (1998). Argument in group decision making: Explicating a process model and investigating the argument-outcome link. *Communication Monographs*, 65, 261-281.
- Watson, W. E., Michaelsen, L. K., & Sharp, W. (1991). Member competence, group interaction, and group decision making: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76, 803-809.

There is no class meeting on October 23. Spend the class time catching up on any missed reading and working on a paper proposal, which will be due October 28.

Week 5

Introduction to Jury Deliberation: Background and Selected Studies (Oct 28)

- Ryan, J. P. (1999). The American trial jury: Current issues and controversies. *Social Education*, 65, 458-461.
- Lempert, R. O. (1993). Why do jury research? In R. Hastie (Ed.), *Inside the juror: The psychology of juror decision making* (pp. 242-254). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pettus, A. B., & Badzinski, D. M. (2000). An exploratory study of argument in the jury decision-making process. *Communication Quarterly*, 48, 380-396.
- Pettus, A. B. (1990). The verdict is in: A study of jury decision making factors, moment of personal decision, and jury deliberations--from the juror's point of view. *Communication Quarterly*, 38, 83-97.
- Kameda, T. (1991). Procedural influence in small-group decision making: Deliberation style and assigned decision rule. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61, 245-256.

Theories of Jury Decision Making (Oct 30)

- Sunwolf & Seibold, D. R. (1998). Jurors' intuitive rules for deliberation: a structural approach to communication in jury decision making. *Communication Monographs*, 65, 287-307.
- Boster, F. J., Hunter, J. E., & Hale, J. L. (1991). An information-processing model of jury decision making. *Communication Research*, 18, 524-547.
- Pennington, N., & Hastie, R. (1993). The story model for juror decision making. In R. Hastie (Ed.), *Inside the juror: The psychology of juror decision making* (pp. 192-221). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 6

Information Processing and Sharing (Nov 4)

- Propp, K. M. (1999). Collective information processing in groups. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research* (pp. 225-250). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gigone, D., & Hastie, R. (1993). The common knowledge effect: Information sharing and group judgment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65, 959-974.
- Larson, J. R., Foster-Fishman, P. G., & Keys, C. B. (1994). Discussion of shared and unshared information in decision-making groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 446-461.
- Moore, P. J., & Gump, B. B. (1995). Information integration in juror decision making. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 25, 2158-2179.
- Hollingshead, A. B. (1996). Information suppression and status persistence in group decision making: The effects of communication media. *Human Communication Research*, 23, 193-219.

Status and Influence (Nov 6)

- Lovaglia, M. J., & Houser, J. (1996). Emotional reactions and status in groups. *American Sociological Review*, 61, 867-883.
- Driskell, J. E., Olmstead, B., & Salas, E. (1993). Task cues, dominance cues, and influence in task groups. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78, 51-60.
- Wittenbaum, G. M. (2000). The bias toward discussing shared information: Why are high-status group members immune? *Communication Research*, 27, 379-401.

Part III: Difference and Relational Communication

Week 7

Gender (Nov 11)

- Haslett, B. B., & Ruebush, J. (1999). What differences do individual differences in groups make? The effects of individuals, culture, and group composition. In L. R. Frey (Ed.),

The handbook of group communication theory and research (pp. 115-138). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Seibert, S., & Gruenfeld, L. (1992). Masculinity, femininity, and behavior in groups. *Small Group Research*, 23, 95-112.

Propp, K. M. (1995). An experimental examination of biological sex as a status cue in decision-making groups and its influence on information use. *Small Group Research*, 26, 451-474.

Radecki, C. M., & Jaccard, J. (1996). Gender-role differences in decision making orientations and decision-making skills. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 26, 76-94.

Flanagin, A. J., Tiyaamornwong, V., O'Connor, J., & Seibold, D. R. (2002). Computer-mediated group work: The interaction of member sex and anonymity. *Communication Research*, 29, 66-93.

Relational and Nonverbal Communication (Nov 13)

Ketrow, S. M. (1999). Nonverbal aspects of group communication. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research* (pp. 251-287). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Keyton, J. (1999). Relational communication in groups. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research* (pp. 192-222). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Anderson, C. M., Martin, M. M., & Riddle, B. L. (2001). Small group relational satisfaction scale: Development, reliability, and validity. *Communication Studies*, 52, 220-233.

Week 8

Culture and Ethnicity (Nov 18)

Oetzel, J. G. (2002). The effects of culture and cultural diversity on communication in work groups: Synthesizing vertical and cultural differences with a face-negotiation perspective. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *New directions in group communication* (pp. 121-137). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Watson, W. E., & Kumar, K. (1992). Differences in decision making regarding risk taking: A comparison of culturally diverse and culturally homogeneous task groups. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 16, 53-65.

Perez, D. A., Hosch, H. M., Ponder, B., & Trejo, G. C. (1993). Ethnicity of defendants and jurors as influences on jury decisions. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 23, 1249-1262.

McLeod, P. L., Lobel, S. A., & Cox, T. H. (1996). Ethnic diversity and creativity in small groups. *Small Group Research*, 27, 248-264.

Sosik, J. J., & Jung, D. I. (2002). Work-group characteristics and performance in collectivistic and individualistic cultures. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 142, 5-23.

DeTurk, S. (2001). Intercultural empathy: Myth, competency, or possibility for alliance building? *Communication Education*, 50, 374-384.

There is no class meeting on November 20. Spend the class time catching up on any missed reading and working on a full paper outline, which will be due November 25.

Part IV: Groups in Society

Week 9: Small Meetings in Large Societies (Nov 25)

Schwartzman, H. B. (1989). *The meeting: Gatherings in organizations and communities*. New York: Plenum. [Chapters 1-2.]

Fisher, J., Silver, R., Chinsky, J., Goff, B., Klar, Y., & Zagieboylo, C. (1989). Psychological effects of participation in a large group awareness training. *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology, 57*, 747-755.

Gastil, J., Deess, E. P., & Weiser, P. (2002). Civic awakening in the jury room: A test of the connection between jury deliberation and political participation. *Journal of Politics, 64*, 585-595.

Week 10: Groups in Social Change Organizations (Dec 2 & 4)

Polletta, F. (2002). *Freedom is an endless meeting: Democracy in American social movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Read chapters 1-4 for Tuesday and chapters 5-8 for Thursday.]

Week 11: Student Presentations (Dec 9 & 11?)

If there are a large enough number of separate presentations, we will schedule a class session on December 11 at the same time and place. Please leave it open on your calendar.