

Small Group Communication course syllabus (Fall 2005)

COURSE: Small Group Communication (COMM 2503)

TEXT: Effective Small Group and Team Communication 2nd edition
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**INSTRUCTOR
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Office Hours: M/W 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
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 F 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
 or by appointment

ACCOMODATIONS: If you wish to request accommodation for a documented disability, please contact the Office of DisAbility Services in BH 1007 (the Learner Development Center). Call 479-619-4384 or 479-619-4324 or email mkirk@nwacc.edu to schedule an appointment. After that, please meet with me to discuss accommodations. I'm happy to help!

**WEATHER &
CLASS
CANCELLATION
POLICY:** In case of bad weather, call the Student Information Line at 479-619-4377 or listen to local TV/radio stations. (Please note: it's possible K-12 schools may be closed but the college will be open. One reason for that the K-12 schools have to consider the road conditions where buses travel.) If the college is open and it's safe to travel, we'll hold class as scheduled. I realize some of you may live in the Far Reaches of Beyond, and may not be able to travel even if the main roads are clear; if that's a problem, we'll work something out. If we can't meet on campus, I will post a notice to our virtual classroom as soon as possible; be sure to log in regularly and check for updates and messages. (We'll discuss this feature in depth in early September.)

Whenever I am physically unable to be in class as scheduled, we'll work online to stay on schedule. Student-use computers with Internet access are available at both the main campus and the Washington County Center.

**COURSE
OBJECTIVES:** Small group communication focuses on the processes of communication within small groups and work teams. You'll have opportunities to develop and apply communication skills by completing exercises and assessments, participating in group interactions, and delivering presentations.

Together, we'll work on developing effective group and team skills, and we'll also work to strengthen critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making skills. **These skills are essential for success as a communicator.** Wherever possible, we'll connect class discussions and activities to the communication venues that most affect you—the workplace, your home, and your community. The classroom format will combine discussions, presentations, and small group activities.

Here's a "starter list" of course goals:

- Understand the basics of small group communication theory
- Explore varied leadership styles and group roles
- Develop decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills
- Apply the principles of Appreciative Inquiry to group processes
- Strengthen critical thinking, writing, reflection, and oral presentation skills

ACADEMIC CREDIT & CAREER INFO:

Have questions about transfer credits, graduation requirements, or degree options? Please visit the academic advisors in the Learner Development Center (BH 1007).

Want to know what you can do with a degree in communication? Check out the poster in my office (BH 1063), visit the department website, and check out NWACC's exclusive Virtual Career Center. You're also very welcome to meet with me and discuss career options. For example, there are dozens of academic majors that you can "power up" with an academic minor in Communication. I'm a Certified Global Career Development Facilitator, and eager to help!

Please consider joining Sigma Chi Eta, the national honor society for communication students in two-year colleges. Membership in a professional organization like Sigma Chi Eta is a definite résumé-booster and a great networking resource for you. If you're interested in membership, let's talk!

RIGHTS & GRIEVANCES

I'll make every effort to provide you with the tools you need to meet your educational goals in this course. You're expected to adhere to the guidelines for student conduct and academic honesty stated in the College Catalog. If you have any complaints or grievances, please follow the procedure outlined in the Catalog.

RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEARNERS:

NWACC is a Learning College. **You, the individual learner, are a full partner in the learning process, and assume primary responsibility for your educational choices, actions, and decisions.**

During this course, I'll create options for learning and will design collaborative learning activities to help you achieve your goals. We work hard to uphold our reputation as a high-caliber community of learners. Please read (and heed!) the Statement of Rights & Responsibilities, written by NWACC faculty and students and published in the Student Handbook and College Catalog.

Check out this attribute list of successful students—how many are part of your academic work ethic?

Successful students:

- Acknowledge their personal responsibility for academic success
- Establish educational and career goals
- Understand the classroom is part of your "real world"
- Commit to attend class as scheduled and actively participate
- Communicate and behave with honor and professional courtesy
- Ask questions and share ideas
- Work well with others
- Appreciate differences as well as similarities
- Manage their time effectively
- Study, discuss, and learn course material
- Are responsible, actively engaged, and interested!

ETHICS:

Academic Dishonesty: The College's Academic Dishonesty policy is stated in the College Catalog (available [online](#) and in print). Violation of this policy is grounds for grading sanctions, admonition or probation, and/or suspension or expulsion.

I've found many students don't understand what constitutes plagiarism, and consequently don't understand how to avoid it. Saying "I didn't know," "I didn't mean to," or "I forgot" does not excuse you from taking credit for someone else's work.

If you use an idea, a phrase, an illustration—anything that's not your original

ETHICS
(continued)

contribution—you must acknowledge the source. Failure to do so is an act of plagiarism. Please read the College Catalog carefully, and understand your obligations as a learner. This is a non-negotiable issue.

Ethical learners understand the importance of citing sources. Doing so demonstrates your ability to find information, evaluate its usefulness, and use it properly in the context of your own work. By citing your sources, you're demonstrating your skill as a scholar.

By the way, many students often believe that listing references at the end of your assignment is enough, but that's **not** sufficient; you must include in-text citations as well. You may use either APA or MLA style. NWACC's Library provides excellent resources to help you learn how to properly cite your source of information.

A short refresher: if you use something verbatim (word for word), indicate this by using "quotation marks" around the quote, and use the appropriate in-text citation. If you paraphrase information you've found (that is, you put their ideas into your own words), you must acknowledge the source with an in-text citation, as well. Whether you paraphrase or quote others, remember to use both in-text citations and include your source in your reference list at the end of your document. Once you get in the habit of citing your sources, it just becomes a habit (a good one!) that takes no effort at all. I'll bring examples of properly cited materials to class, and am happy to direct you to other resources to learn more.

Learning how to properly acknowledge the source of your information is an essential skill all learners must develop. I choose to believe all my students are ethical, responsible learners, but my "Pollyanna" psychological operating software does have a reality chip installed. I (sadly) realize a tiny percentage of students will cheat. So fair warning: I consider plagiarism to be theft of property. It's an unlawful, criminal act, and I **will** pursue all judicial options. You'll earn a grade of zero for the assignment, face dismissal from the course with a failing grade, or be referred to the judicial committee to face possible expulsion from school. Don't risk your reputation and your future!

**ATTENDANCE &
CONDUCT**

By registering for this course, you entered into a contractual agreement as a learner. **As a full partner in the learning process, you assume primary responsibility for your educational choices, actions, and decisions.** The Schedule of Classes clearly states the dates and times this class meets. Please be on time for each class.

As your learning facilitator, I've committed to being in class as scheduled, to the best of my ability, and fully expect you to honor the same commitment. If you're not here, you can't participate in our collaborative learning process, and your absence affects everyone in the course.

It's no coincidence that the #1 reason students fail a college class is that—oops—they don't go to class! Academic transcripts don't distinguish between "F" for non-attendance and "F" for failing to master the material. And even if you take the course again and pass, that "F" is a permanent mark on your transcript. Now, what do you think future employers think when they see you failed Communication? (And when you consider that communication skills are consistently rated among the top five most important and valued skills in the workplace...)

I've designed the class sessions to help you comprehend the academic concepts, with many opportunities built in for skill acquisition and demonstration. That's why it's important you attend class, and to behave professionally while you're here. Behaving in an unprofessional manner is **not** part of our Learning College culture.

Here's an **incomplete** list of unacceptable behavior:

- Disrespectful and hateful language

- Violent and/or threatening conduct
- Disruptive cell phone use
- Activities not related to the course (for example, pager/email communication, text message, or your math homework!)

**ATTENDANCE &
CONDUCT
(continued)**

About phones: I realize you may need to have your phone on. If you have children, for example, or ailing family members, of course you'd want to be available. If this or something similar is true for you, let's discuss it, and switch your phone to "vibrate" instead of ring. (I'll do the same, and let you know at the start of class if I have my phone with me.) If you absolutely must take a call while in class, please do so with the minimum of interruption to the group. Step out of the class and go out into the main hallway to take your call, for example. The same holds true for my office, by the way.

On rare occasions, illness or another situation may prevent you (or me) from attending as planned. In that event, please submit appropriate documentation from your healthcare provider or employer. I do, however, understand that life's obligations may interfere with your planned attendance, so you can miss 10% of the course without academic penalty. Three late arrivals equal one absence. (I take roll at the start of each class, each day starting at a random spot on the course enrollment list. You're late if you arrive after I've called your name.) **Please anticipate traffic delays and parking challenges, and plan accordingly to arrive on time.** Each absence beyond the 10% allowed will result in a zero for that day's discussion grade.

If you can't attend class, email me (sholmes@nwacc.edu) or call 479-619-4126 and leave a message to let me know, then contact a classmate to learn what you missed in class. Time constraints simply won't allow me to repeat class presentations, homework instructions, or exams. I am available to help you in your learning journey; my office hours, however, are not a substitute for our time together in class.

You're responsible for learning what you missed. Please take the initiative and ask your classmates for this information. (In fact, I strongly encourage you to exchange names, phone numbers, and/or email addresses with other students.) **Please do not contact me to ask "Did I miss anything important?"** (Take a moment and consider what that question implies, and I think you'll appreciate my attitude!)