

COMM 3720

<i>Times</i>	<i>Days</i>	<i>Location</i>
10:00 – 11:50	M-TH	GAB 310

Professor: Brian Richardson
Office: GAB 309C
Phone: 565-4748 (office)
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<u>Office Hours:</u>	
M&W	10:30-11
M&W	12:30 – 1:30
& by appt.	

Disability Accommodation:

The instructor will cooperate with the university's Office of Disability Accommodation to provide reasonable accommodation to students who need it. Students who wish to self-identify and request assistance under this policy should register with the Office (located in the University Union) by the second class day.

Course Rationale:

Groups are an integral part of our personal and professional lives and this trend is increasing. Regardless of what career or life path you've chosen, you'll ultimately spend a great deal of time in group settings. The purpose of this course is to aid your understanding of groups and particularly relevant communication issues within groups. This course will provide you with an understanding of the major communication theories, issues, and concepts related to the study of small groups.



Course Objectives:

Students completing this course should be able to:

I hope to help you meet these objectives through the following:

- Discussions of reading and lecture material in class
- Tests to insure that you are grasping material
- An opportunity to explore a case study of an actual group's formation and (possibly) death
- One major group project your teams will plan, execute, and evaluate
- Evaluation assignment – evaluation of self and others as group members

Textbook and Readings:

Rothwell, J. D. (2013). *In Mixed Company: Small Group Communication*. (8th ed.). South Melbourne, Australia: Thomson Learning.

Additional readings may be distributed in class. Class notes outlines will be placed on the course website. **You are responsible for ensuring that you print copies of the class notes via Blackboard prior to class, and getting copies of all class handouts.**

ASSIGNMENTS

Pop quiz/Homework Assignments: On 10 occasions this semester, you will have an opportunity to earn 5 points (50 points total) for successfully completing a pop quiz/homework assignment. Dates for these assignments are random and *may* even occur during the final week of the semester. If you have thoroughly read and thoughtfully considered the readings you should excel. There will be NO makeup opportunities for pop quizzes and they will be completed during the first 5 minutes of class. Homework assignments will be graded based upon writing efficiency and content. Note: I will give one additional participation assignment/pop quiz and let you drop your lowest score.

Required Midterm Exam: All students are required to take a midterm exam that will have an objective format (e.g. multiple choice, true/false, matching). The exam will cover material from Ch. 1 – 5 in the textbook plus any additional readings. (100 points)

Required Final Exam: All students are required to take a final exam that will have an objective format (e.g. multiple choice, true/false, matching). The exam will be held during finals week and will cover all lecture and textbook material provided after the midterm exam. There are no makeup exams for the midterm or final. If you miss an exam, you lose the points associated with it. The only exceptions are due to documented sickness, death in the family, or some other catastrophe. I am very unlikely to allow you to take an exam after the scheduled time if you do not contact me *prior* to the exam. (100 points)



Behind the Music Analysis Paper: Using youtube.com, you will select a *Behind the Music* group and analyze their experience using group concepts. (80 points)

Final Group Project (activity/analysis paper/group member evaluation): A large portion of your grade will be based on a final group project. This will provide you an opportunity to apply all of the knowledge you have acquired over the semester to a tailored project. NOTE: The assigned group project will require outside as well as in-class time. It is your obligation and responsibility to attend your group's scheduled meetings. Failure to participate actively in the group project will result in the lowering of your final grade. [activity = 200 points (10 for proposal; 190 for final product), paper = 100 points, peer evals = 70 points].

Total points breakdown

Midterm exam	100 pts.
Final exam	100 pts.
Decision paper	80 pts.
Group project	200 pts.
Final paper	100 pts.
Pts. from peer eval.	70 pts.
Homework/Pop quizzes	<u>50 pts. (10 x 5 pts. each)</u>
Total	700 pts.

Grade determination

The points in this class are based on the assignments discussed above. Your final grade is based entirely on the sum of those points assigned in the class, and I will adhere rigidly to those points. The points correspond to the following university guidelines: an A is reserved for excellent work; a B is for above average performance; a C is awarded for average work; a D simply means passing, and an F indicates below average, nonpassing work.

Final grades will be: 630-700 = A 560 – 629 = B 490 – 559 = C 420 – 489 = D 0 – 419 = F

Course policies

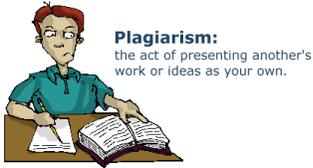
Attendance is taken at the beginning of class. A student is expected to arrive on time and be present for the entire class period. Take care of personal needs (bathroom break, phone calls, eating, etc.) prior to class. Excessive lateness (judged at the instructor's discretion) will constitute an absence. To allow for illness or other unforeseen situations, students in the course are allotted three absences before a penalty is imposed. Excused and unexcused absences count the same. Each absence beyond the limit will result in **your final course grade being lowered by 10 points per absence** (e.g. from 635 to 625 for one excessive absence). Excessive absences caused by serious health problems will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Late work. Except under the most extreme circumstances (and documentation of those circumstances is required), late work will be penalized. If you encounter an emergency situation of some kind, it is best to communicate with me about it earlier rather than later. **Late papers** on either the decision analysis paper or the final project will be graded for half credit. This is a severe penalty, but it is better than zero points (plus, you get the feedback on the paper). It is not fair to others who met the deadlines if I accept your's late. I will not accept any papers more than one week late. Also, no longer are printer troubles and computer problems reasonable excuses for late papers. **I suggest knowing the equipment well enough and allowing ample time in case of problems.**

Crisis Contingency. In the event of the university closing for weather-related reasons or illness outbreak, e.g. flu, please visit the course website on Blackboard. I will provide instructions on how to turn in assignments and how the class will proceed utilizing Blackboard's Announcements function.

Student Behavior in the Classroom: Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr

Distracters. Students who consistently talk amongst themselves during lectures, discussions, video clips, other students' questions, etc., are subject to the loss of one letter grade at the instructor's discretion.



Academic Dishonesty. All persons shall adhere to the Code of Student Conduct regarding academic honesty, including acts of cheating and plagiarism. Of particular concern in a course with written and oral assignments is the issue of plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined by Webster's (1989) as "the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (p. 1100). In other words,

plagiarism is stealing. You must cite your sources accurately and consistently in both your oral and written assignments. Penalties for plagiarism will vary according to severity and will range from a failing grade to prosecution through the University System. (*cartoon from www.thecampussocialite.com*)

Grade questions. Any grade may be argued; however, if you want a change in your points, you will need to present a written argument to the instructor at least one day following your receiving the grade (but not more than one week later). Do not confront the instructor or the TAs on the day tests or papers are returned (before you have considered the feedback).

Writing quality assumptions. Every paper you turn in must be of quality, both in content and style. I expect you to use a computer and to take advantage of the programs that guard against such errors; however, there is no substitute for good proofreading. All papers should be written in APA style. Please refer to the Communication Studies department's writing guidelines for additional information, located at: http://www.comm.unt.edu/writing_guide_for_student_papers.htm

Completing the Course. Students are expected to complete all assignments for this course during the semester. Assigning a grade of "incomplete" is rare, and in order to request an "I," the student must meet these requirements: a) The student must have completed at least 75% of the course assignments; b) The student must be passing the course; c) There must be an unforeseen and compelling reason why the course cannot be completed on time (usually a medical or military reason); and d) The student must present a plan for completing the assignments within the time period specified in the catalog.

Grade guidelines for all written assignments:

D papers – are challenging to read because they contain so many grammatical and sentence structure errors. The main topics, and how those topics are being addressed, are not clear.

C papers – meet all of the requirements, adequately and accurately explore the topic and are clearly written, well organized, and at least minimally interesting to read.

B papers – exceed basic requirements in several areas, and are very well written. Draws from more challenging literature/material, insightful and creative in presentation and/or analysis, teaches the course material to the reader in its application and use of terminology and theory.

A papers – are exceptionally well written, exceeding requirements in many areas. Translates complex ideas with uncommon clarity, and provokes the reader to think about the topic in new ways. Draws from very challenging literature/material; provides appropriate references to authors and theorist names; teaches the course material to the reader in such a way as to enhance understanding of it.

Please note: **This syllabus is a guide and may be changed by the professor at any time without prior notice.**

**Reminder: "Like" us on
Facebook (UNT Department of Communication
Studies)**

Course Topics and Key Dates

Date	Topic	Assignment due dates
June 3	Course introduction	June 4: Information sheets due
June 4 (read Ch. 1)	Communication Competence	
June 5 (read Ch. 2)	Groups as Systems	
June 6 (Ch. 3: read 76-101)	Group Development	
June 7 (Ch. 3: 101-113)		
June 10 (Ch. 4: 116-130)	Developing Group Climate	
June 11 (Ch. 4: 131-144)		
June 12 (Ch. 5: 146-158)	Roles	June 12:
June 13	Film: <i>12 Angry Men (Minority Influence)</i>	Proposals for Final Group Project due
June 17 (Ch. 5: 158-186)	Leadership	June 18:
June 18	Midterm Exam	Midterm Exam
June 19 (Ch. 6: 190-217)	Developing Effective Teams	
June 20 (Ch. 7: 222-244)	<u>Defective</u> Group Decision Making	
June 24 (Ch. 7: 244-255)	<u>Defective</u> Group Decision Making	June 24: BTM analysis papers due
June 25 (Ch. 8: 258-278)	<u>Effective</u> Group Decision Making	
June 26 (Ch. 8: 278-298)	<u>Effective</u> Group Decision Making	
June 27	Groups meet: Videos due Monday	
July 1 (Ch. 9: 302-324)	Power in Groups	July 1: Group presentations
July 2 (Ch. 9: 324-341)	Power in Groups	
July 3 (Read Ch. 10)	Conflict Management in Groups	Term papers due 7/3 at 11:59 p.m.
July 4 (Thursday)	No Class – July 4 Holiday	
July 5 (Friday)	Final Exam	

COMM 3720: Group Project Description

The primary objective of the project is to have students apply small group/team communication theories and concepts they have learned to an actual group project. At the same time, students are allowed to be simultaneously creative and educational. For this project, your group will develop a 9-10 minute video segment which explains a small group/team communication concept or theory. Some examples of concepts/theories on which to base your video include group conformity, the effect of size upon groups, group development, transacting power, groupthink, leadership, the power of roles, etc. Elements of your video may include a narrator providing basic information, skits/role-plays, experiments, interviews with other students, clips from movies or tv shows, photographs, presentation of academic studies, and so forth. As a group, you'll need to decide which concept you plan to shoot the video for, how to develop the video, who will address what parts of the video, and the content of the video.

Upon completion of the project, students will present their videos to classmates, faculty, and others invited to the class. Your video will be graded on how effectively it explains the concept, its creativity level, its clarity, its ability to incorporate a number of creative elements, and its ability to meet the time expectations. Note: There is an ethical component to this assignment. Please do not utilize hidden video footage or identify people in embarrassing situations.

In addition, the project includes written elements promoting reflection and encouraging students to recognize connections between abstract theories and demonstrated behaviors. Upon completion of the Video Assignment, students should be able to:

1. Apply the major theories and practices of group communication to their own group experience.
2. Understand and recognize the fundamental role communication plays in the creation, maintenance, and functioning of groups.
3. Recognize and analyze communication dynamics within small groups.
4. Identify and analyze the ethical issues involved in group communication.

What will you turn in:

1. **Your video (on DVD, youtube, or as a computer file)**
2. **Any preparation material, including a Supporting Materials sheet**
3. **Your peer evaluations (on the scheduled date).**

Final project paper

After you have completed the group assignment, you will turn in an individually written analysis of your group, consisting of 5-6 typed, double-spaced, error-free, well-written pages (page count does not include cover page or reference page). Your analysis should be thoughtful and thorough, consistently illustrating critical thinking skills and good writing. This paper is designed to allow you to apply the concepts learned throughout the semester to a “real-life” group communicative situation. Think of this paper as an assessment and critique of your group experience. Content falls into three main areas: description, application of group concepts, and evaluation. This is not a “group paper”; each individual will write his/her own. Paper should be written in APA format.

This paper will include, at minimum, the following elements: (a) title page, (b) a description of your group project – briefly tell me about your video, (c) a description of your project – succinctly review your project (e.g., how did you plan, make decisions, execute, and evaluate your experiences), (d) application of three course concepts – choose any three course concepts and apply them to your group experience based upon the research literature (e.g., if your group had a problem with a lack of cohesiveness, discuss research articles that have investigated group cohesiveness and what facilitates or inhibits group cohesiveness), (e) evaluation and recommendations for the future -- what did you do well, what should you have done differently, how could you have improved your group experience, (f) conclusion – provide a conclusion that summarizes your main points and integrates the goals you have identified and how they were achieved, and (g) reference pages.

The writing portion of this project requires additional research (a minimum of six credible, academic sources). Websites, e.g. www.time.com or www.wikipedia.org do NOT count as one of your references.

Peer evaluation: In addition to the instructor’s grade, each group member will receive a peer evaluation from the other members of the group.

Please note: this paper and your group decision paper will be turned in using **turnitin.com**

***Behind the Music* case study**

Directions

Visit www.youtube.com, type in “behind the music” and choose a group to analyze, with particular focus on group communication issues we’ve discussed or will discuss in class. Your analysis will consist of a 3-4 page report. At a minimum, you should briefly describe the group analyzed, identify and explain what group concepts were evident, and draw connections between the group’s experiences and the concepts. Treat this assignment as an opportunity to use the *Behind the Music* documentary to teach someone who knows very little about group concepts. For example, you may notice examples of group formation, defective decision-making processes, and leadership, and analyze those using the documentary. Please choose a group for this assignment, e.g. Journey, TLC, Metallica, Thin Lizzy, and not a solo artist, e.g. Taylor Swift, Lil Wayne, etc.

Due date: see syllabus

The paper should be 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins, and be spell-checked, proof-read, and grammatically correct. A reference page should be attached, and your paper **MUST** include at least four references (journal articles from library or scholarly book chapters). Websites, e.g. www.groupsarefun.com or www.groupthink.com do NOT count as one of your references. Paper should be written in APA format.

Grading Criteria

Criteria for Written Activities will be followed in assessing this learning activity (See separate sheet in this packet). Additionally, the paper will be judged on how well the case study reviewed is used to teach course concepts to the reader. For this paper and the final paper, you may schedule an appointment with your TA or the course instructor to review a draft of your paper; this must occur at least one day before the paper is due.

Note: Papers which plagiarize from other works will be graded as a zero. If you use someone else’s work, cite it. They probably spent much time working on it so give them credit.

Grading Criteria for Written Activities

Is the paper well organized and well written?

- _____ Topic clear right at the beginning.
- _____ Main points to be made in paper are previewed in the first paragraph.
- _____ Topic headings used to mark major issues/concerns.
- _____ Transitional sentences make clear linkages between paragraphs and sections.
- _____ All main points in preview are addressed
- _____ It is easy to follow the organization pattern (logical, sequential)
- _____ Sentences are well crafted, grammatically correct, clear and concise.
Word choice should enhance not inhibit the accessibility of your ideas (i.e., write what you mean as directly as you possibly can).
- _____ Writing is in author's own words (e.g., avoiding excessive quotation; - letter grade for excessive quotation)

Does the content demonstrate the author's mastery of the subject matter?

- _____ Terminology and jargon are used correctly and defined clearly and concisely.
- _____ Use of course concepts/theories reflects a clear understanding of their content.
- _____ Comparisons between course concepts and real-life examples are reasonable, useful and insightful.
- _____ Conclusions of the author are clear and concisely presented.

Does the content demonstrate insight on the part of the student author?

- _____ It is clear that the student has achieved new insight into the subject.
- _____ The student is able to teach the subject matter through his/her writing
- _____ The student shows a depth of reflection on the topic in his/her writing.

10 Other Writing Errors to Avoid To Improve Your Writing

1. A is a word and lot is a word, but you should avoid using a lot, which is not even a word, and a lot, which may be two words, but is trite. Try a great deal or some other word phrase.
2. Sexist language will not be tolerated in any form. Use phrases that allow you to avoid he and she. In no circumstance should the plural they be used for a singular case of either he or she.
3. Use the word which only in a prepositional phrase or when set off with a comma, which is the correct way to use the word. Use that in all other cases.
4. Effect and affect are not the same word. Effect the noun is the result of some cause (anxiety causes several effects). Effect the verb indicates the causation of some outcome (The presence of anxiety effects a climate of silence). Affect the noun is a synonym for emotion (many communication majors display a great deal of affect). Affect the verb means about the same as influence (lack of confidence affects people differently).
5. Contractions have no place in formal communication. Please do not use them in your papers.
6. Know the difference between to, two, and too.
7. Do not end sentences with prepositions. This is a mistake with which I care not to deal.
8. The past tense of lead (as in *she leads her people*) is led. Don't be led astray by typing *lead*.
9. A good paragraph is indented and should have a minimum of three sentences. However, it should not ramble on for pages. Each time you begin a new idea, start a new paragraph. Thus, each section in your papers will likely have several (not one) paragraphs.
10. Use a colon when listing items such as the following: names, theories, etc. A semicolon is usually used to separate related sentences; however, it may also be used to separate items in a list when commas would be unclear.