Communication 349 – “Small Group Communication”  
Fall 2014  
Syllabus (Tentative)

Instructor: Gary K. Hughes, Ph.D.  
Office: FAC 104  
Office Hours: MWF 8:00-9:00 a.m.; 3:00-4:15 p.m. (or by appointment)  
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COURSE INFORMATION

Prerequisite: Effective for Fall 2014 Colonnade Program students—21 hours of Foundations and Explorations Courses, or junior status.

Colonnade Program: Fulfills 3 out of the required 9 hours of course credit from the Connections category of the WKU Colonnade (General Education) Program, specifically in the Systems area.

Description: Studies group dynamics, interaction and communication in group situations. (TopNet Catalog Description)

“Whereas individual achievement was once the hallmark of personal success, we now live in an era in which success often depends on your ability to work in groups.” (Engleberg & Wynn, 2007)

Small group communication is generally defined as the interaction of three or more people working together to achieve a common goal. The purpose of a group decision making course is to study the group process including group dynamics, interaction, and communication in small group situations. This course focuses on secondary groups such as committees, task forces, quality circles, work groups, activity groups, boards, and teams. Specifically, this course provides both information and application of group decision making theories and processes. Each student will function as a member of a 5–7 person group through most of the summer term. Students will have the opportunity to learn and practice a variety of skills including research, organization, creative thinking, critical thinking, leadership, problem solving/decision making, analysis of group processes, use of computer mediated group communication, and conflict management.

Course readings, lectures, discussions, and assignments are designed to enhance students’ overall competency when participating in small group and team communication. Students will engage in a number of group activities including a service learning project involving a local nonprofit organization. The knowledge gained about groups and multiple group experiences is intended to help students become both more comfortable and more competent participants in a variety of small group contexts.

Student Learning Outcomes
The student will be able to:

- Analyze how systems evolve
- Compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems.
- Evaluate how system-level thinking informs decision-making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself.
- Explain the importance of groups socially and functionally in society in general and in organizations in particular.
- Identify the components of systems theory as applied to the small group communication context.
• Recognize the communication principles that are essential for properly functioning small group systems.
• Describe the processes involving in the formation of a group.
• Analyze a problem as a group, by defining the problem, describing the various causes and components of the problem, establish criteria for a possible solution, generate numerous possible solutions, evaluate the possible solutions, choose and defend a solution that meets the criteria, assess the possible obstacles to implementing the chosen solution, and describe the implementation plan for the chosen solution.
• Analyze possible conflicts, recognize the conflict styles involved, and describe an appropriate method for resolving specific conflicts.
• Function as a leader of a small group, recognizing the various leader roles taken by different members of the group system at different times, and choose the appropriate leadership style required by specific group circumstances.

Student Performance Criteria
The student will:
1. Prepare/complete individual and group assignments.
2. Participate in online discussions, blogs, meetings, and group decision making and problem solving exercises.
3. Synthesize and apply small group communication theories and principles as they apply to various group contexts.
4. Research and analyze the group’s chosen problem while providing necessary criteria for a solution.
5. Propose, research, analyze, and evaluate possible solutions to the group’s chosen problem.
6. Complete major group projects and presentations.

Required Materials & Readings:

Scantron Forms #882-ES (teal green) for each exam

IF YOU NEED HELP

Assistance from Dr. Hughes
If you have questions or concerns about course materials or assignments then please contact me by e-mail, come by during my office hours, or make an appointment with me.

Office for Student Disability Services (from OSQS)
Students with disabilities that require accommodations (academic adjustments and or auxiliary aids or services for this course) must contact the Office for Student Disability Services DUC A200. Telephone number is 270-745-5004 (TDD: 270-745-3030). Please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

The Learning Center (supplemental assistance)
Should you require academic assistance with your WKU courses, The Learning Center (located in the Downing Student Union, A330) provides free supplemental education programs for all currently enrolled WKU students. TLC @ Downing Student Union offers certified, one-on-one tutoring in by appointment or walk in. TLC is also a quiet study area (with side rooms designated for peer-to-peer tutoring) and offers a thirty-two machine Dell computer lab to complete academic coursework. Additionally, TLC has satellite locations. Each satellite location is a quiet study center and is equipped with a small computer lab. These satellite locations are located in Douglas Keen Hall, McCormack Hall, and Pearce Ford Tower. Please contact TLC @ Downing Student Union for more information or to schedule a tutoring appointment.
TLC @ DSU
Sunday 4:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Monday – Thursday 8:00 am – 9:00 pm
Friday 8:00 am – 4:00 pm

TLC @ Keen, McCormack & PFT (PFT residents and their guests only)
Sunday – Thursday 6:00 pm – 11:00 pm

Research Appointments with your Personal Librarian
At WKU Libraries, your Personal Librarians are always ready to help! We have librarians for every program on campus, plus Special Collection librarians and archivists. Their goal is to save you time and help you be successful on term papers and other projects by showing you what you need to know to get started and be successful. Start your research by scheduling an appointment with your Personal Librarian. Find them at http://www.wku.edu/library/dlps/subj_lib_subject.php, call Helm-Cravens Reference Desk at 270-745-6125, or email web.reference@wku.edu.

Writing Center Assistance (for help with theory/concept term paper)
The Writing Center is located in Cherry Hall 123 on the Bowling Green campus and also offers consultations for students during regular operating hours. Writing tutors have been trained to provide helpful feedback to students at all phases of a writing project: they can help you brainstorm ideas, structure your essay, clarify your purpose, strengthen your support, and edit for clarity and correctness. But they will not revise or edit the paper for you. See instructions of the website www.wku.edu/writingcenter for making online or face-to-face appointments. Or call (270) 745-5719 during their operating hours (also listed on our website) for help scheduling an appointment.

CLASS ORGANIZATION
This class will be organized into small learning/problem solving teams for the duration of the semester. Much of the class time will be spent and many graded assignments will involve working in teams/groups. Each student will be evaluated in two different areas: grasp of content and analysis on an individual basis, and the application of concepts and skills in the group setting. Each student is not only responsible for his/her own individual grades, but he/she is also required to help their group achieve its goal as well. Small groups will only be successful when each member contributes to the group’s goal. All team members will receive the same score on elements of the symposium and group problem solving/decision making assignments.

NOTE: This is a GROUP course and is not designed for individuals to be successful while their group members fail. To be successful in this course you will have to learn to be accountable for your own actions and also depend upon your team members on group projects. Groups will not be successful unless each and every member is doing his/her part on group projects.

ATTENDANCE
Penalty for Nonattendance of Class
Groups become a team in part through shared experiences. When members are absent, they “fall behind” the group. Since the class time will be spent not only in lectures and discussion but also with group activities, your attendance is a must. Therefore, the policy for this course with regards to university calendared class meetings is that the final semester grade will be reduced by 30 points for each unexcused absence over two.
Penalty for Nonattendance of Group/Team Meetings
The importance of your attendance and participation in your group’s meetings, activities, and work cannot be stressed enough. Your attendance at mutually agreed upon meetings is a must. Therefore, the policy for this course with regards to your group’s meetings is that you are expected to attend your group’s meetings in and out of class. In addition, if a student misses 30 percent or more of his/her team’s meetings, he/she will be considered “fired” from the group and will receive a failing grade for the course. In order for every group member to attend the group’s meetings, open lines of communication are a must. Each group member should provide all other group members with multiple means by which he/she can be reached. For asynchronous forms of communication (e.g. email, voice mail, etc.), such forms of communication must be checked regularly. If a member must miss a meeting, that member should inform the other members of their group of their missing, the reason for missing, and provide any materials for which the member is responsible in that meeting.

Penalty for Tardiness
Not only are you expected to be in class each day, but you also need to be on time. Tardiness is unprofessional and disruptive. Attendance is defined not only as being present in class, but being present within 5 minutes of the start of class through the completion of the class session. Unexcused tardiness may be penalized by not being allowed to make up work done in class prior to your arrival and may lead to the same point deduction as an unexcused absence. If you come to class after the roll has been taken, it is your responsibility to notify me after class that you were present.

Excused Absence Policy
Make-up work is not allowed unless I officially excuse your absence, which means you must provide me with proper documentation. You are responsible for contacting me regarding any excused absence. You must present written documentation in advance of an absence for a university-sponsored event and within 1 week of your return to class for any other absence. Approved make-up work is due the second class meeting of your return.

An excused absence is defined as:
1. Illness of the student or serious illness of a member of the student's immediate family
2. The death of a member of the student's immediate family
3. Trips for members of student organizations sponsored by an academic unit, trips for University classes, and trips for participation in intercollegiate athletic events
4. Major religious holidays.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT
In order to build an open, professional classroom atmosphere everyone should follow certain ground rules. These rules of civility include but are not limited to:

1. Displaying respect for all members of the classroom community, both your instructor and fellow students.
2. Paying attention to and participating in lectures, group activities, presentations, and other exercises.
3. Avoiding unnecessary disruptions during class such as ringing cell phones (turn them off before class begins), text messaging, private conversations, reading newspapers, and doing work for other classes.
4. Avoiding negative, disrespectful or derogatory language on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, or veteran status that may unnecessarily exclude or affect members of our campus and classroom community.

Failure to observe these rules of classroom etiquette will be grounds for dismissal from class for the day, being counted absent for the day, and receiving a failing grade for any work missed during that class time.
ACADEMIC OFFENSES (PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING)

I expect that all of the assignments you complete are always your own work. However, many students are not sure exactly what "your own work" means, so, please read again the information on plagiarism and cheating from your Student Handbook. Aside from copying work, plagiarism includes incorrectly citing sources or presenting someone's information as your own, without crediting the source. To avoid this, you should carefully make notes to keep track of where your information came from. In written form, you must use quotation marks when referring to another's work. In a presentation where you are paraphrasing, you can say "According to... (give name & source information)". It does not take much effort to make sure you follow the rules for using another's thoughts.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE for telling your audience or reader whether you are:
1. directly quoting from a source
2. paraphrasing closely from a source, which means using significant portions of another source's sentences or language
3. using the ideas advanced by a different source

Penalty for Academic Dishonesty
Western Kentucky University and the Department of Communication are committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on an exam, or purchasing papers, speeches, or other assignments will immediately receive a failing grade on the assignment and in the course, and will be reported for disciplinary action. Falsified medical excuses and presenting another student's work as your own fall within the guidelines of this academic integrity policy.

As you can see, these are extreme measures for academic offenses that we believe are serious. If you have any questions about whether you may be unknowingly plagiarizing in your work, please be sure to contact me well in advance of the due date for your assignment.

EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content and Analysis (Individual)</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of group decision making in the movie “Thirteen Days”</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One page Article Reaction Papers (2 x 25 points each)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Quizzes (10 x 10 pts. each through BlackBoard)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Exams (2 x 75 pts. each; Scantrons required)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam (Comprehensive; essay)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class participation</td>
<td>50</td>
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Application, Skills and Team Performance (Group)

Symposium on a Group Communication Theory:
- Written Report | 50 |
- Presentation | 50 |

Group Decision Making Assignment:
- Group Research Bibliography | 50 |
- Minutes of Meetings/Agendas | 50 |
- Written Report | 100 |
- Presentation | 100 |

Peer Evaluations/Feedback | 100 |

TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS | 1000 |

Grading Scale: A = 900 - 1000 pts.
B = 800 - 899 pts.
C = 700 - 799 pts.
D = 600 - 699 pts.
F = below 600