

CMS 112 Small Group Communication (3 credits)

SEMINAR

Instructor: Gary Morse, 781/246-9162, gmorse7@earthlink.net

“Many activities within organizations simply cannot be carried on and many problems cannot be solved on an individual basis or in two-party relationships. To think otherwise denies the reality of organizational life. But, in general, we are remarkably inept in accomplishing objectives through group effort. This is not inevitable. It is a result of inadequate understanding and skill with respect to the unique aspects of group operations.”

**-The Human Side of Enterprise –
Douglas McGregor**

COURSE DESCRIPTION: A practical course in the theory and practice of small-group problem solving. Small group processes and procedures are examined and practiced. Students will focus on leadership which fosters effective teamwork by a group and how effective leaders adapt to the competencies and needs of their members as well as the situations within which they work.

COURSE TOPICS: This course will focus on four major topics:

- *basic group processes: group formation, conflict, structure, and performance.
- *social influence processes: power, leadership, conformity, deviancy, and the group environment.
- *problems in groups: deindividuation, group think, and inter-group conflict.
- *applications: business & industry, classrooms, family, social, and therapeutic settings.

READINGS: *“Communications in Groups”* by Adams and Galanes

Read the entire book and do the Pre-Seminar Assignment before the class meets

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Through discussion and examination of and practice with various concepts and processes of communication within small groups, each student should:

- 1) Gain an understanding of role and personality development and how these factors, brought into a group setting can influence the process of the group, and develop personal skills for effective group leadership/facilitation.
- 2) Gain an understanding of the theories and models that serve as a basis for the study of groups. A concept of “group think,” effectiveness of group leadership and how different leadership styles affect the group.
- 3) Develop knowledge and the ability to identify the stages of group development as they occur. Impact of nonverbal communication and practice critical listening & speaking skills.
- 4) Gain an awareness of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors which can cause a group to become dysfunctional.
- 5) Develop and have an opportunity to practice problem-solving skills and approaches to conflict resolution with groups. Transfer learning from the classroom to any small group setting.

PRE-SEMINAR ASSIGNMENTS:

- Read the assigned text **PRIOR TO** the beginning of the seminar.
- Identify one small group that is significant to your life and develop a list of seven “curiosity” questions that refer to the “how’s and why’s” of the operations of this group. Then answer each of these questions by referring to a model, theory, or general discussion in your textbook. For instance, you might be a member of a group at work that never gets anything done. Based on what you have learned from your text, why not? How are rules made? Who is the Leader? Is there a leader? Who derails the group? Is “Group Think” a factor? Etc., etc., etc. Develop your questions and then use what you have learned from your readings, to answer them. Each question and answer should be at least $\frac{3}{4}$ page, typed, double-spaced. **THIS ASSIGNMENT IS DUE ON THE FIRST DAY** of the **SEMINAR**.
- Attached to this syllabus are two copies of “The Way We See Me” questionnaire. **PRIOR TO** the seminar you must give a copy of this questionnaire to two different people within the group you identified previously. Ask them to complete and return the questionnaires to you. Bring them with you to the first class session. The purpose of this exercise is to give you feedback on how others perceive you.

COURSE CONTENT: This course is designed to present short lectures followed by discussion and experiential exercises to demonstrate concepts described in the lectures. Its intent is not merely to present academic content about group dynamics and communication, but also to experience becoming a group and dealing with the evolving process. The experiential element often takes different forms depending on the particular “chemistry” of the members of the learning group.

TOPICS OF LECTURES AND DISCUSSIONS:

- Variables influencing group dynamics
- Personality and its influence on role development within groups
- Birth order and its impact on group behavior in family of origin and later groups
- Role projection
- Kurt Lewin’s original work with group theory and the evolution of group theory to the present
- Group theory as it applies to family, school, work, and therapy groups
- Group process vs. group content variables
- Dependence, independence, and interdependence variables
- Importance of goal-setting and the establishment of norms
- Development of group stages
- Importance of an atmosphere of trust, safety, open-mindedness
- Group structure vs. flexibility
- Problem-solving skills
- Conflict resolution
- Self-disclosure and its relevance in groups
- Group Think
- Johari Window and Zucchini Connection: Similarities and differences
- Circumplex Model and Bale-s Interaction Process Analysis
- Psychodynamic vs. Communication Theory
- Task vs. People orientation of leaders
- Democratic, Autocratic, Laissez-Faire leadership styles
- Power orientation of leaders
- Managing vs. facilitating

- Teambuilding within organizations
- Group synergy
- Nonverbal behaviors
- Listening

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND STUDENT EVALUATION:

A) **Attendance in each class is critical.** If you know in advance that you must miss a class during the seminar, I would suggest enrolling at another time. If an emergency that causes you to miss a class arises during the week of the seminar, a make-up assignment may be arranged. These are handled on a case-by-case basis through negotiation with the instructor. If you must miss two classes, your grade will drop a full letter. Three absences will result in a grade of “F”.

B) Grading is on a contractual basis:

Requirements for a “C”:

- full completion of all pre-seminar assignments
- completely prepared to discuss all resource materials assigned (text plus)
- active and constructive participation in all class activities
- completion of the learning journal to be handed-in daily
- daily reports on your observations of groups of which you are a part during the week of the seminar

Requirements for a “B”:

- In addition to requirements for a “c”, satisfactory completion of a take-home examination. This exam will be short essay, exploring issues in small group communication.

Requirements for an “A”:

- In addition to requirements for “B” and “C”, satisfactory completion of a paper in which a major aspect of small group communication is related to a specific group with which the student is involved. Details for completion of this paper will be discussed in class.

NOTE: Variations within letter grades (a-, b_, etc.) will be determined by the quality of the work.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY:

The Doane College Academic Integrity Policy will be adhered to in this class. All projects, papers, and tests will represent your own work. Any use of other’s ideas and words without proper citation of sources is plagiarism and will result in loss of all points for that assignment or exam.

As part of a training assignment, I am distributing this questionnaire to some of my co-workers, relatives and friends. It is designed to give me your impressions of my personality. I am attempting to compare the way other people see me with the way I see myself. While it may be difficult for you to express your impressions exactly, I would appreciate as frank a rating as you can give me.

This questionnaire should not take long to complete. First, try to construct an overall view of your impressions about my personality before answering the specific questions. Consider each item briefly and indicate the first choice that occurs to you. If you come to an item which you feel unable to answer with certainty, place a question mark, instead of a check, in one of the spaces to indicate a guess. However, please do answer every question. If you have comments that will help explain any of your answers, please use the space provided or write in the margins. Explanatory comments will be appreciated. Please begin by considering my main strengths and weaknesses. Describe each as carefully as you can in the spaces below:

Main Strengths:

Main Weaknesses:

How well do the following words apply to me?

	Not At All	Slightly	Moderately	Rather Well	Extremely Well
Self-confident					
Tactful					
Irritable					
Quiet					
Emotionally Variable					
Serious					
Energetic					
Well-Adjusted					
Cooperative					
Prejudice					
Unpredictable					
Selfish					
Leader					
Considerate of others					
Good natured					
Tense					
Accepts criticism					
Aggressive					
Easy to get to know					
Imaginative					
Sense of Humor					

Respondent: ___ Self ___ Co-Worker ___ Friend ___ Relative

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