

CMS 112: Small Group Communication

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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 focus on leadership that 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.

CMS 112 fulfills the requirement for a Foundational Area of Knowledge in Community and Identity.

Any course that fulfills that requirement will ensure that students gain a greater understanding of themselves and the communities in which they live and work, and how identity is formed through the interaction of the individual and larger society. Students will work to:

- explore dimensions of human experience with regard to perceptions of self
- understand how individuals interact to form communities and social structures
- analyze the practical and ethical implications of interactions between individuals and those social structures

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

- Gain an understanding of theories and models that serve as a basis for the study of groups.
- Develop knowledge and the ability to identify the stages of group development as they occur.
- Gain an awareness of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors which can cause a group to become dysfunctional.
- Develop and have an opportunity to practice problem-solving skills and approaches to conflict resolution in groups.
- Transfer learning from the classroom to any small group setting.

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 to merely present academic content about group dynamics and communication, but also to experience becoming a group and dealing with the evolving process. Each session will require short reading assignments based on the content of the class. The reading assignments will be provided at the beginning of the course.

Course Content Areas & Assignments:

- Components of Small Group Communication
 - Assignment Due: Short paper describing a small group you are a part of and want to function more efficiently. This will be used as the base for your case study throughout the course.
- Personality Traits and Diversity in Small Groups
 - Assignment Due: Social Impressions Worksheets
 - Activity: Personality Indicators Assessment
- Models of Small Group Development, Socialization, and Characteristics of Small Group Tasks
- Dysfunction in Small Groups and Small Group Decision-Making Procedures
- Development of Small Group Roles, Small Groups versus Teams
- Virtual Groups, Social Media, and Online Etiquette
- Conflict and Cohesion in Small Groups
 - Assignment Due: "My Group Experience" paper
 - Activity: Conflict Styles Assessment
- Final Presentations and Written Exam

Course Requirement and Student Evaluation:

Attendance in each class is critical.

Grading is on a contractual basis:

Minimum requirements for a "C":

Full involvement in all class activities
Completely prepared to discuss all resource materials assigned
Completion of all assigned homework

Minimum requirements for a "B":

Meet all requirements for "C,"
Satisfactory completion of a take-home paper "My Group Experience" and presentation
Satisfactory completion of final exam

Minimum requirements for an "A":

Meet all requirements for "B,"
Perfect attendance
Develop and facilitate group discussion questions in at least one class session

Note: Variations within letter grades (A+, B-, etc.) will be assessed by the quality of the work.