COMMUN 323-201: COMMUNICATION IN GROUPS AND TEAM
Summer 2019

Instructor: Erin Ruppel, Ph.D.  
Email: ruppele@uwm.edu
Office: JOH 229  
Office hours: by appointment

Email is generally the best way to reach me. I will respond within about 24 hours.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Course Description
This course focuses on the analysis of communication processes in groups and teams, including examination of
theories and research findings, group and team participation, and decision-making skills. The course is designed
to achieve the following departmental learning outcomes:

- Oral/written communication: Design and deliver effective oral and written communication to both
  expert and lay audiences.
- Research capabilities: Conduct independent research, integrate research with one's own findings, and
describe one's research in written and oral form.

Required Reading
Boston, MA: Ally & Bacon.

Course Website
D2L will be used for the course website: http://d2l.uwm.edu. All discussion and quizzes will take place on
D2L, and papers will be turned in via D2L. Class announcements will be made on the front page of the
course’s D2L site. Please check D2L frequently to receive important information about the course.

You will not be penalized for official problems with D2L. However, individual computer and/or Internet
problems are not an acceptable excuse for turning in assignments late, missing discussions, etc. To avoid
potential issues, be sure to (a) complete assignments and discussion in advance of the due date/time and (b)
have a back-up plan to gain access to an Internet-enabled computer (such as through the library on campus or a
public library) in the event of a problem.

Issues with D2L should be addressed with campus tech support. Contact information is available at
http://www4.uwm.edu/technology/help/campus/index.cfm

COURSE POLICIES

Grading
Grades are based on the point system. The total points earned by the end of the semester will determine your
final grade.

A  = 93-100%  B+ = 87-89.9%  C+ = 77-79.9%  D+ = 67-69.9%
A- = 90-92.9%  B  = 83-86.9%  C  = 73-76.9%  D  = 63-66.9%
B-  = 80-82.9%  C-  = 70-72.9%  D-  = 60-62.9%  F  = 0-59.9%

It is very unlikely that the grades for this class will be curved at the end of the semester. Thus, for example, if
you have earned 79.9%, you will receive a C+. Your final grade is final. University policy (and fairness
toward other students) prohibits offering opportunities for grade increases (e.g., writing an extra paper or
rewriting a previous assignment) that are not available to all students in the course.

Your final grade will consist of the following points:

Updated 12/14/18
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter quizzes (30 points each X 4 quizzes)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter discussions (30 points each X 4 discussions)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application papers (60 points each X 2 papers)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solution proposal</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group skills training</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE</strong></td>
<td><strong>480</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time Investment**

The campus credit hour policy states: “Study leading to one semester credit represents an investment of time by the average student of not fewer than 48 hours for class contact in lectures, for laboratories, examinations, tutorials and recitations, and for preparation and study; or a demonstration by the student of learning equivalent to that established as the expected product of such a period of study.” The amount of time that an average student should expect to spend on this class is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required reading and quizzes</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application papers</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group projects</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note that these are averages and that you will be evaluated in the course based on your performance, not the amount of time you put into the course.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Chapter Quizzes**

Quizzes are open-note and open-book and consist of 30 multiple-choice questions each. Once you begin the quiz, you will have 60 minutes to complete it. Quizzes are due each week of discussion by **Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.** (see course calendar for specific deadlines). **Collaborating on quizzes is not allowed and will be penalized with a score of zero for the quiz or the course, depending on the severity of the violation.**

**Chapter Discussions**

Discussion is comprised of 2 parts: your original posts and your response posts.

(1) **Original posts:** Your original reaction to the readings should be posted to the course discussion board each week of discussion by **Friday at 11:59 p.m.** (see course calendar for specific deadlines). Original posts should be at least 350 words.
Your post should demonstrate critical thinking about the reading material as well as pose questions or thoughts that will spur ongoing discussion among your classmates. The primary goal with your original post is to delve deeper into the reading material, analyze and critique it, and apply it in meaningful ways. Consider the following questions as you develop your original post:

- What are the theoretical and/or practical questions driving the chapters?
- What are the principal contributions of the chapters? What are the key research findings?
- What are the key concepts associated with the theory/theories? What are the strengths and limitations of the reading(s)?
- What are the practical applications for individuals in your major, career, or life?
- What questions or critiques arise from your reading of the material?
- What key connections or themes can be identified across the readings?

(2) Responses: You are expected to actively engage in discussion with your classmates. Each week of discussion, you must post 5 responses by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. This may include responding to someone who has commented on your original post. Responses should be at least 125 words each. Try not to wait until Sunday night to respond to your classmates, as participating throughout the week helps to enhance the value of these discussions.

Your posts should be thoughtful and substantive. A substantive post makes a meaningful contribution to discussion, helps advance discussion, and shows that you have done the readings. It’s generally perfectly fine to agree or disagree with another post. However, a substantive post will also explain why you agree or disagree and try to advance discussion in a meaningful way. Excellent posts will demonstrate critical thinking and analysis of the material, engage actively with classmates regarding issues and ideas, articulate viewpoints clearly, and develop a clean line of thought and rationale.

Original posts are worth up to 10 points each (Excellent = 10, Good = 8, Fair = 7, Poor = 6), and each response is worth up to 4 points (Excellent = 4, Good = 3, Fair = 2, Poor = 1). You are welcome (and encouraged!) to post more than 5 responses in each discussion. If you post more than 4 responses, your grade for that week will be based on the 4 responses on which you earned the most points.

Discussion due dates are in the course calendar below. All contributions to discussion must be made within this time frame. Discussion is like attending and participating in class—you need to be there with everyone else for it to serve its purpose. It is therefore not possible to make up missed discussion, and contributions to one unit cannot be applied to your grade on another topic.

Application Papers
You will complete 2 application papers that apply relevant course concepts to your experiences in your group. Papers will be due approximately 1 week after each group project (see course calendar for specific due dates). Although you should use names, this paper is not about “tattle-telling.” It is about understanding how behaviors can facilitate or hinder group productivity and cohesiveness. See the assignment sheet on D2L for more details and the assignment rubric.

Late papers will be penalized 10% of the total grade per day they are late (e.g., 20% would be deducted from a paper due on Tuesday and submitted on Thursday). To ensure objectivity and fairness to all students, deadlines will be strictly enforced. All papers must be submitted via D2L. It is your responsibility to ensure that your paper is correctly uploaded by the deadline. Late penalties will apply to papers that are incorrectly
uploaded (e.g., uploading a blank document or a paper for the wrong course). The late work policy applies only to papers—it is not possible to make up the quizzes, discussion, or group projects.

**Problem-Solution Proposal**
Your team will use the reflective thinking approach to problem solving (Ch. 11) to analyze a problem on campus or in the community and offer an effective solution. You are looking to persuade your audience that the problem is significant and that the proposed solution is efficient and effective. See the assignment sheet on D2L for more details and the assignment rubric.

**Group Skills Training**
You will be part of a team of communication experts creating a training presentation on a group communication topic. Think of this presentation as a “how-to guide” for your audience. You are looking to provide your audience with the skills to be successful in group interactions as they relate to your particular topic. See the assignment sheet on D2L for more details and the assignment rubric.

**Peer Evaluations**
You will fill out a peer evaluation form after each team project and upload it to the D2L dropbox with your application paper. Each team member’s average score from his/her teammates will be added as bonus points to his/her grade. You will have 5 points per member of your team, not including you, to distribute amongst your team members (e.g., if you are in a team of 6 people including you, you will have 25 points to distribute; if you are in a team of 5 people, you will have 20 points to distribute). If you believe that everyone contributed equally to the team’s work, then you should give everyone 5 points. Be fair in your assessments, but if someone in your group did not contribute adequately, give him/her fewer points. If someone worked harder than the rest, give that person more than 5 points. Anyone receiving an average of fewer than 3.5 points will have 20% deducted from their team presentation grade and will not receive any peer evaluation bonus points. (Note: It very, very rarely happens that someone’s group gives them fewer than 3.5 points. I reserve the right to change bonus points or penalties if a situation ever arises where it becomes clear that points assigned reflect something other than someone’s contribution to the project. I expect that you all will distribute points fairly.)

**UNIVERSITY/DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES**

**Students with Disabilities:** If you need special accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please contact me as soon as possible.

**Accommodation for Religious Observances:** Students will be allowed to complete examinations or other requirements that are missed because of a religious observance.

**Academic Misconduct:** The University has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, the appropriate citation of sources, and respect of others’ academic endeavors. Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing a course or even suspension or dismissal from the University.

**Students Called to Active Military Duty:** Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty will be made.

**Complaint Procedures:** Students may direct complaints to the head of the academic unit or department in which the complaint occurs. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed...
to the head of the department or academic unit in which the complaint occurred or to the appropriate university office responsible of reinforcing the policy.

**Grade Appeal Procedures:** A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides. These procedures are available in written form the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College/School.

**Discriminatory Conduct:** Discriminatory conduct (including sexual harassment) is reprehensible and will not be tolerated by the University. It subverts the mission of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. The University will not tolerate behavior between or among members of the University community, which creates an unacceptable or working environment.

**Incompletes:** A notation of “incomplete” may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who had carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantial cause beyond the student’s control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. An incomplete is not given unless you prove to the instructor that you were prevented from completing course requirements for just cause as indicated above.

More information about these policies is at [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf)

**COURSE CALENDAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (5/28-6/2)</td>
<td>Theories of group communication and development</td>
<td>Chs. 1-3</td>
<td>Quiz: Wed 5/29 @ 11:59 pm&lt;br&gt;Original posts: Fri 5/31 @ 11:59 pm&lt;br&gt;Responses: Sun 6/2 @ 11:59 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (6/3-9)</td>
<td>Creative problem solving in groups</td>
<td>Chs. 10-12</td>
<td>Quiz: Wed 6/5 @ 11:59 pm&lt;br&gt;Original posts: Fri 6/7 @ 11:59 pm&lt;br&gt;Responses: Sun 6/9 @ 11:59 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (6/10-16)</td>
<td>Group work</td>
<td></td>
<td>Problem-solution project: Sun 6/16 @ 11:59 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (6/17-23)</td>
<td>Group discussion and relations</td>
<td>Chs. 4-6</td>
<td>Quiz: Wed 6/19 @ 11:59 pm&lt;br&gt;Original posts: Fri 6/21 @ 11:59 pm&lt;br&gt;Responses: Sun 6/23 @ 11:59 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (6/24-30)</td>
<td>Group work</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group skills training: Sun 6/30 @ 11:59 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (7/1-7/7)</td>
<td>Communicating as leaders and followers</td>
<td>Chs. 7-9</td>
<td>Quiz: Wed 7/3 @ 11:59 pm&lt;br&gt;Original posts: Fri 7/5 @ 11:59 pm&lt;br&gt;Responses: Sun 7/7 @ 11:59 pm&lt;br&gt;Application paper #2: Sun 7/7 @ 11:59 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contents of this syllabus are subject to change at the instructor’s discretion. Any changes will be announced and posted on D2L.