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Semester effective: Spring 2026

Communications (COMM) 1607 Small Group Communication (3 Units) CSU

Advisory: Eligibility for English C1000 or C1000E strongly recommended

Hours and Units Calculations:

48 hours lecture. 96 Outside of class hours. (144 Total Student Learning Hours) 3 Units

Catalog Description: This course provides the principles of communication in a variety of group contexts including the foundational knowledge and practice of speech making in a democratic society, while simultaneously emphasizing communication theory and research. Students are exposed to rhetorical theory, small group theory and public speaking fundamentals within the context of their interpersonal interactions, group communication processes, and live presentations. Students will learn historical roots and key rhetorical theories that ground the study and practice of public speaking, and be able to discover, develop and critically analyze ideas and information in public discourse. Students will explore and evaluate group communication processes, including problem solving, conflict management, decision making, and leadership. CI-D COMM 140

Type of Class/Course: Degree Credit

Representative Texts:

Fujishin, Randy. *Creating Effective Groups: The Art of Small Group Communication*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Roman & Littlefield Publishers, 2023.

Beebe, Steven A., and John Masterson. *Communicating in Small Groups: Principles and Practices*. 12<sup>th</sup> ed., Pearson, 2019.

Radtke, Trudy, editor. *Small Group Communication*. College of the Canyons, 2019.

<https://openlab.bmcc.cuny.edu/com-260-small-group-communication/wp-content/uploads/sites/1760/2021/06/Small-Group-Communication.pdf>

Linabary, Jasmine. *Small Group Communication: Forming and Sustaining Teams*. Pressbooks, 2020.

<https://pressbooks.pub/smallgroup/>

Additional Optional Materials: None

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, a successful student will be able to:

1. Explain the theoretical foundations of creating and sharing knowledge, including the canons of rhetoric, the Aristotelian proofs, theories of small group communication, and the psychological, social and cultural basis of oral communication.
2. Exhibit effective problem-solving communication skills.
3. Demonstrate successful conflict-management strategies.
4. Engage in sound reasoning to reach a well-reasoned decision by knowing and adhering to ethical communication practices which include truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.
5. Identify communication skills that contribute to effective leadership.
6. Demonstrate the ability to discover, critically evaluate and accurately report information by finding, critically examining, and using supporting materials from primary and secondary sources for credibility, accuracy, and secondary sources for credibility, accuracy, and relevance in their speeches and presentations. And by applying rhetorical principles to analyze historical and contemporary public discourse.
7. Organize presentations effectively by practicing and refining the concepts presented in the course through a variety of well-prepared faculty-supervised, faculty-evaluated speeches delivered to a live audience (one to many) using effective delivery techniques and employing effective verbal and nonverbal practices while delivering a speech and managing communication apprehension. Design and use presentational aids effectively to enhance the message.
8. Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively prepare for and deliver presentations within small group settings by understanding the theoretical foundations of creating and sharing knowledge, including the canons of rhetoric and the Aristotelian proofs of ethos, pathos, and logos.
9. Explain the psychological, social, and cultural basis and significance of oral communication as it occurs in dyads, small and large groups, and public settings
10. Demonstrate effective listening skills in various settings by listening critically to provide constructive criticism to peers.
11. Adapt communication strategies to fit the audience and situation.
12. Present their views persuasively, in front of a live audience by conceptualizing and effectively using compelling arguments in support of a guiding thesis and organizational pattern appropriate for the audience, occasion, and across a variety of contexts.

Course Level Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Assess, compare, and contract audience, purpose, subject, and types of presentation.
2. Evaluate rules and norms of group interaction.
3. Identify, analyze, and critique problems to produce a systematic procedure for problem solving.

Local General Education Learning Outcomes:

Demonstrates the ability to communicate knowledge, information, ideas, and feelings, and enhance the ability to evaluate, problem solve, and make decisions, information management and computer literacy.

Course Scope and Content:

- Unit I            Working in a Group
- A. Working in diverse groups to demonstrate rhetorical sensitivity to diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and accessibility, in public speaking and small group contexts.
  - B. Four elements of a problem-solving group
  - C. The small group as a system
  - D. The power of one
  - E. Characteristics of diverse groups
  - F. The power of diversity
  - G. Context, audience, and purposes of small-group communication: Dyads, small and large groups, public settings, and group dynamics and/or roles within groups.
  - H. Understanding and managing communication apprehension in public speaking and small group contexts
  - I. Individual and group exercises
- Unit II            Discovering Yourself
- A. Being open to self-discovery
  - B. Spending time by yourself
  - C. Self-discovery inventories
  - D. Speaking kindly to yourself
  - E. Accepting yourself
  - F. Accepting others
  - G. Critically thinking about yourself as a communicator.
  - H. Individual and group exercises
- Unit III           Expressing Yourself Clearly
- A. Communication is a learned behavior
  - B. Five roles that prevent clear expression
  - C. The communication process
  - D. I-Statements
  - E. Four levels of communication
  - F. Gender differences in conversational strategies
  - G. Guidelines for speaking clearly
  - H. Checking your implicit communication biases
  - I. Using inclusive language and behavior
  - J. Defensive vs. supportive group climates
  - K. Individual and group exercises
  - L. Oral presentation includes practicing and refining the concepts presented in the course through a variety of well-prepared faculty-supervised, faculty-evaluated speeches delivered to a live audience (one to many) using effective delivery techniques and employing effective verbal and nonverbal delivery skills in public speaking and small group contexts

M. Rhetorical theories and genres of communication (e.g. Aristotle), including informative and persuasive speaking

Unit IV

Listening for Understanding

- A. The importance of listening
- B. The process of listening
- C. Poor listening styles
- D. Barriers to listening
- E. Acceptance: A requirement for listening
- F. Listening for understanding: Active listening critically to provide constructive criticism to peers.
- G. Advantages of active listening
- H. Guidelines for active listening
- I. Effective Listening including strategies for providing and receiving feedback on presentation content and form
- J. Demonstrate effective critical listening to speakers and small group members
- I. Intercultural awareness
- J. S.O.A.R. Technique
- K. Individual and group exercises

Unit V

Problem Solving in Groups

- A. Myths of small group problem solving
- B. Decision making
- C. Decision-making techniques
- D. Discussion questions
- E. The standard problem-solving agenda
- F. Problem-solving communication skills
- G. The circular nature of problem solving
- H. Being more creative
- I. Individual and group exercises

Unit VI

Preparing for Discussion

- A. You don't know everything
- B. We can always know more
- C. Where to research
- D. What to research
- E. Constructing an information sheet
- F. Effective presentational aid design and use of visual aids
- G. Testing evidence and reasoning by conceptualizing and effectively using compelling arguments in support of a guiding thesis and organizational pattern appropriate for the audience, occasion, and across a variety of contexts.
- H. Recognizing logical fallacies
- K. Providing and receiving feedback about both the content and forms of communication by applying rhetorical principles to analyze historical and contemporary public discourse. And by understanding the theoretical foundations of creating and sharing knowledge, including the canons of rhetoric and the Aristotelian proofs of ethos, pathos, and logos.
- I. Ethical communication by knowing and adhering to ethical communication practices which include truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.
- J. Your time management
- K. Effective research for presentations, including organizing, evaluating, and reporting

information by finding, critically examining, and using supporting materials from primary and secondary sources for credibility, accuracy, and secondary sources for credibility, accuracy, and relevance in their speeches and presentations.

L. Individual and group exercises

#### Unit VII

##### Guiding Discussion

- A. Guiding discussion to a shared path
- B. Task-guiding behaviors
- C. Social-guiding behaviors
- D. Being an effective follower
- E. Being an effective online participant
- F. Three online meeting situations
- G. Individual and group exercises

#### Unit VIII

##### Leading a Group

- A. What is leadership?
- B. Approaches to leadership
- C. The attitude of the servant leader
- D. Leading an effective meeting
- E. Benefits of shorter meetings
- F. Facilitating virtual diverse group meetings
- G. Developing leadership skills in others
- H. Taking care of yourself as a leader
- I. Communication and leadership
- J. Individual and group exercises

#### Unit IX

##### Building a Cohesive Group

- A. The social dimension
- B. Feeling successful
- C. Feeling connected
- D. Feeling valued
- E. Feeling supported
- F. Trusting others
- G. Groupthink: When groups are too cohesive
- H. Individual and group exercises

#### Unit X

##### Managing Conflict

- A. A different approach to conflict
- B. Myths of conflict
- C. Advantages of conflict
- D. Persuasion
- E. Three types of group conflict
- F. Conflict management
- G. Dealing with procedural conflict
- H. Dealing with substantive conflict
- I. Dealing with interpersonal conflict
- J. Specific interventions for dysfunctional behavior
- K. The spirit of collaboration
- L. Forgiveness
- M. Individual and group exercises

### Learning Activities Required Outside of Class:

The students in this class will spend a minimum of 6 hours per week outside of the regular class time doing the following:

1. Studying
2. Answering questions
3. Skill practice
4. Completing required reading
5. Written work
6. Observation of or participation in an activity related to course content: Attend a real-world group meeting (e.g. college committee meeting, library board, city council, student government), and analyze the communication strategies used by the members to persuade or influence each other. Connect your analysis to Aristotle's three modes of proof (ethos, logos, pathos). Prepare a 1-page analysis paper presenting your analysis and evaluating the effectiveness of the group's persuasive dynamics.

### Methods of Instruction:

1. Lectures
2. Discussion
3. Purposeful Collaboration
4. Activities
5. Independent Study

### Methods of Evaluation:

Quizzes and tests: applying rhetorical principles to analyze historical and contemporary public discourse.

Each group member would be participating in research, writing, rehearsal process and presentation of the group projects in front of a live audience in English.

### Examples of Assignments and/or Activities:

Group research project and presentation: Students will work together in groups to discuss, write, and research a group project. For example, students could research a company that needs improvement and show what needs to be improved and why and how those proposed ideas could be utilized for the success of the company. They are writing an informative and persuasive research outline, paper and presentation. Based on the information and examples provided in class, students will prepare a formal outline for the group presentation, in which each student prepares and presents their assigned part for a 10 to 15 minute informative and persuasive oral presentation. The outline and paper include a minimum of 3 sources from reliable and credible sources such as books, articles, and academic journal articles with corresponding references using APA guidelines. The outline should be 2-3 pages long. The paper would consist of 3-5 pages.

Research for the group project Finding, critically examining, and using supporting materials from primary and secondary sources for credibility, accuracy, and secondary sources for credibility, accuracy, and relevance in their speeches and presentations. As well as, conceptualizing and effectively using compelling arguments in support of a guiding thesis and organizational pattern appropriate for the audience, occasion, and across a variety of contexts.

Rehearsal of group presentation: Students will practice their individual parts of the group presentation in front of their groups in preparation for their presentation in front of the class.

Presentation of the group project: Individual group members will present in front of a live audience in English, which includes listening critically to provide constructive criticism to peers. And knowing and adhering to ethical communication practices which include truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication. As well as, demonstrating rhetorical sensitivity to diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and accessibility.

Students will critically analyze group presentations by evaluating their own presentation skills, the presentation skills of fellow group members and the presentation skills of other groups. The 3–4-page essay will analyze speech content, organization, and delivery. It will provide an assessment of the speaker's strengths and weaknesses and specific ideas for improvement.

Supplemental Data:

TOP Code:	150600: Speech Communication
SAM Priority Code:	E: Non-Occupational
Distance Education:	Not Applicable
Funding Agency:	Y: Not Applicable (funds not used)
Program Status:	Y: Program Applicable
Noncredit Category:	Y: Not Applicable, Credit Course
Special Class Status:	N: Course is not a special class
Basic Skills Status:	N: Course is not a basic skills course
Prior to College Level:	Y: Not applicable
Cooperative Work Experience:	N: Is not part of a cooperative work experience education program
Eligible for Credit by Exam:	NO

Eligible for Pass/No Pass:	C: Pass/No Pass
Taft College General Education:	LCAT: Local GE Communication
Discipline:	Communication Studies