

**COMMUNICATION 315:**  
**SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION**  
Spring 2012

Dr. Russell Stockard    Office Phone: 805-493-3365    e-mail: stockard@clunet.edu

Class: 1:30-2:35 PM, Alumni 113, Office: Swenson 246 Office Hours: MWF 9:200-1010 AM and by appointment. Department meetings and university speakers may cause suspension of office hours.

**California Lutheran University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with various documented disabilities including, but not limited to, physical, learning, visual, hearing, or psychological. If you are a student requesting accommodations for this course, please contact your professor at the beginning of the semester and register with the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities (Pearson Library, Center for Academic and Accessibility Resources, Ext. 3260) for the facilitation and verification of need. Faculty will work closely together with you and your coordinator to provide necessary accommodations.**

Course Competencies:

Writing - the course is designed to emphasize writing, though it is not technically a writing-intensive course

Speech/PowerPoint presentation - students will develop and improve their oral proficiencies and presentation skills

Analytic/critical thinking - students will learn analysis tools and their application.

Synthetic – students will learn to put together information sources creatively and usefully

Information management – students will learn to use and apply information correctly.

Perspectives:

Gender and ethnic issues permeate small group communication and students will be expected to develop an awareness of and sensitivity to such issues. The course meets the Core 21 U.S. Diversity requirement.

Course Purpose:

1. to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of small group communication processes;
2. to supply students with a conceptual framework to apply to effective group discussion techniques to practical communication situations;
3. to aid in development of students' communication and cultural competence in small group settings, including sensitivity to gender and cultural issues, particularly in the U.S..
4. to provide students with knowledge of, and skill in issues of technology as a learning tool and as a factor in small group discussion.
5. to provide students with practice in presentation skills, listening skills, writing skills, and critical thinking skills in group settings with focus on perspectives of diverse groups .

<u>Course Requirements</u>	<u>Points</u>
A. Attendance, oral, class and on-line participation, discussion of readings	30
B. Six student journals submitted through Blackboard journal feature	60
C. Research paper OR Service-Learning assignment:	
1. Annotated bibliography on technology and small group communication with a short paragraph on seven references (five of which are from scholarly sources such as journals found in online databases) OR a similar bibliography on service-learning, including three references on what service learning is, and two relating it to the type of service undertaken- teaching, athletics, music, etc.	20
2. Individual paper on technology and small group communication with 10 references, five from scholarly sources OR on service learning with seven references.	70
3. Brief oral and PowerPoint presentation in class	20
D. One cooperative exam @ 100 points; one individual exam @ 100 points	200
E. Two class symposiums @ 100 points each	200
F. Paper on film version of <i>Twelve Angry Men</i> @ 100 points	<u>100</u>
Total	700

Grades: A: 658-700 (94-100%); A-:630-657 (90-93%);  
B+: 589-656 (87-89%); B: 588-519(84-86%); B-: 560-587 (80-83%);  
C+: 539-559 (77-79%); C: 518-538 (74-76%); C-: 490-517 (70-73%);  
D+: 469-489 (67-69%); D: 448-469 (64-66%); D-: 420-447(60-63%); F:(59% or below)

#### Course Text

Myers and Anderson, *The Fundamentals of Small Group Communication*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. 2008.

#### COURSE POLICY

**Absences:** Students will be permitted up to three unexcused absences. Participation in the class is extremely important and absences also disrupt group preparation for exams and symposia. After the third unexcused absence, two points will be deducted from the student's grade. Group members will also be permitted to recommend the deduction of one point for failure to show up for group meetings planned outside of class. Excused illness (note from Health Service or doctor), required assigned field trips in other classes, choir tours, and personal/family trips arranged **prior** to the start of the semester are the only justifications. Make-ups for missed coop exams and symposia will consist of a five-to-six-page research paper. I am much more sympathetic to communication beforehand, not to after –the-fact excuses. Just stay in communication with me.

**Group behavior:** If a group member is unprepared for a symposium, the rest of the group may recommend a half grade deduction to the instructor. If a group member is going to be absent without contacting the professor and/or the group by the class **before** the symposium presentation, the professor may deduct a **full grade** from the individual

(e.g., an A becomes an A-, etc.). If an emergency develops between class periods, the group member is responsible for contacting another person in the group if she feels she can make an out-of-class meeting or the class on the day of the symposium. Email addresses, phone, and pager numbers should be exchanged and **used** by group members.

**Late assignments:** Late **papers** will be subject to the loss of three points for each class period the paper is late. Late **paper outlines** will be subject to the loss of two points for each class period the outline is late. Late journal entries will be subject to the loss of one point for each class period the entry is late.

**Plagiarism** is failure to give credit to authors of written or online materials. It is easy to put quotation marks and references in papers. It's hard to make up the loss of a paper grade. Plagiarism is an offense that leads to failure for the assignment on which it is committed. Students will submit their papers to TurnIt.com for evaluation.

## EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS

As is always the case, the professor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus.

This course has been implemented on Blackboard. Students should submit their journals through the Journal function of Blackboard, making sure to attach their entries. Other assignments should be submitted using the Message function. Using both of these functions results in communication taking place exclusively within Blackboard, adding to efficiency of responses by the professor. In other words, I would strongly recommend that students NOT use regular email. In addition, the software also includes a grade reporting function being available to students.

Groups: Students will be assigned to or form their own groups frequently during the semester to produce assignments such as the symposia and cooperative exams. Which grouping decisions will be at the professor's discretion. For assigned and voluntary groups, students will be permitted, actually encouraged to rotate.

Symposia: Each symposium is designed to give students a group experience as well as to yield a finished product. Groups will form, members will record their experiences in journals as the groups go through forming, storming, norming, and, it's hoped, performing. The first symposium will treat a topic in small group communication, such as leadership. Students will be required to submit an outline of their portion of the final presentation as well as research notes. The grade awarded will consist of these written components as well as oral performance. The latter standards will consist of eye contact, facial expression, vocal inflection, gestures and body language.

Cooperative Exam: Each multiple choice, true-false and short answer exam will be done in class with closed books and closed notes. The exams will consist of a part done in conjunction with a group and an individual part. Again, the experience and success of working in a group will be what is really being tested. Individual group members will have to persuade and be persuaded in order to come up with the correct answer. The exam questions will come from class lectures, discussions, the text, and students. In the last case, I will accept one question from each group for each exam.

Journals: The journals are a way of making sure students apply the theory and concepts learned in class to group experiences. Each symposium and some other class exercises will generate material for students to reflect on and enter into the journal. As mentioned previously, journal entries are to be submitted electronically through the Journal function in Blackboard. Students should keep journals in an e-mail folder and will be turned in each week starting **Week Two** after each symposium presentation and at least once more during the semester. Each double-spaced journal entry should be from **three paragraphs to one page** in length and include **frequent and correctly used references to concepts and terms used in the course** (two points). An entry which includes one or two references will receive 3 points. An entry lacking any such references or coherent observations about participation in groups will receive 1 point. These are not formal references such as students will use in research papers, but allusions to specific ideas, concepts, and models. Some of the issues covered include: formation of the group, group identity, factions or cliques, the environment of the group, conflict, group climate, etc.

## PAPER OPTIONS

### Research Paper Option:

One way to meet the paper requirement is a research paper based on research that you do about on-line small group communication. The paper outlines and annotated bibliography of the paper will be submitted before the final due dates for suggestions from me. Each paper will be 9-12 pages long. A paper may use but is not required to include original research (surveys, observation, experiments). In any case, the paper will have to contain an organized review of the relevant research literature and will have at least 10 references. A paper based on original research will still have a review, but five to seven references. A good paper will show evidence of critical thinking, reasoned argument, clear writing, proper usage, grammar, and spelling. It's possible for students to report on research in the second symposium. See below for style issues. Past papers have included online therapy, online support groups, online education, Facebook and other social media, fantasy sports leagues, and smart phones. Using social media to exchange information about persons missing in disasters such as Katrina and the Haitian earthquake and related activities is another possibility. Students choosing this option present their experiences to the class in a brief PowerPoint presentation.

### Service-Learning Option:

As of the start of the semester, the possibility exists that a service-learning option could be a part of the course. Service-learning combines traditional learning with participation in community service. Small group communication skills could be usefully applied in community-based organizations. If this possibility becomes a reality, students could replace the research paper assignment with service-learning participation. The product would be a five-page reflection paper describing the participating students' experience with providing service, including the application of group communication concepts and what the experience taught the student about herself. Students must provide *references on service learning* in the paper and, if possible, tailor those references to the type of service performed., e.g., teaching, coaching sports, etc. Students choosing this option

present their experiences to the class in PowerPoint presentation. This paper assignment has requirements similar to the technology and small groups paper assignment.

#### *Twelve Angry Men* Film Assignment:

Another assignment which is equivalent to a take-home exam based on your viewing of *Twelve Angry Men* will be submitted late in the semester. It may be done in a group with additional questions assigned for each extra group member. In other words, an individual doing the assignment would have to respond in writing to four questions. Two people would have to split six questions, three people seven questions, four, eight questions, five people, nine.

Style: APA style is preferred. You may find these reference sources on CLUNet in the Library section. I deduct one point for each typographical error after the first two.

Grammar and usage: There are some errors that are avoidable. Mistakes from the list below will result in a one-point deduction.

“Its” vs. “it’s”: “its” is the possessive meaning belonging to it; “it’s” is a contraction of “it is.”

“Their” vs. “there”: “their” is the possessive meaning belonging to them. “There” is a preposition referring to location at a distance and is used in the phrase “there is.”

“Effect” vs. “affect”: As a noun, “effect” means “result” as in “cause-and-effect”; “affect” is a verb referring to an action producing a result, such as “The loss of the 12 miners in West Virginia was a tragedy that affected the entire nation.”

On the other hand, “affect” may be used in the field of psychology as a noun referring to the display of emotions. “Effect” may be a verb referring to the action of carrying something out.

Possession and plurals: Possession is indicated by adding an apostrophe and “s” to a noun. Examples include: “Tom” and “Tom’s”, “dog” and “dog’s”. If you are referring to a plural, do NOT add apostrophe and ” s”, but just “s”. Singular: “dog”; plural: “dogs” Exceptions include abbreviations such as pluralizing “QB”. In “QB’s” or “Qbs”. Finally, use your spell-checker and grammar-checker utilities in your word processing programming. They don’t guarantee a perfect paper, but they force you to proofread your document.

#### RESOURCES

Students are encouraged to get help on writing their papers from the Writing Center in the Library.

The Library page has among Research Resources a Psychology page featuring materials about Small Groups.

The following rubrics will be used in presentations and papers.

In addition to the formal rubrics listed below, an **excellent oral presentation** must include calm and appropriate body language (no unnecessary or nervous movements, including relevant gestures), maintaining consistent eye contact, varying vocal pitch and speed, maintaining an audible voice level.

#### Rubric for Holistic Critical Thinking Evaluation (Facione and Facione)

- 4 Consistently does all or almost all of the following  
 Accurately interprets evidence, statements graphics, questions, etc.  
 Identifies the salient arguments (reasons and claims) pro and con;  
 Thoughtfully analyzes and evaluates major alternative points of view;  
 Draws warranted, judicious, non-fallacious conclusions;  
 Justifies key results and procedures, explains assumptions and reasons;  
 Fair-mindedly follows where evidence and reasons lead.
- 3 Does most or many of the following:  
 Accurately interprets evidence, statements graphics, questions, etc.;  
 Identifies relevant arguments (reasons and claims) pro and con;  
 Offers analyses and evaluations of obvious alternative points of view;  
 Draws warranted, non-fallacious conclusions;  
 Justifies some results or procedures, explains reasons.
- 2 Does most or many of the following:  
 Misinterprets evidence, statements graphics, questions, etc.;  
 Fails to identify strong, relevant counter-arguments;  
 Ignores or superficially evaluates obvious alternative points of view;  
 Draws unwarranted or fallacious conclusions;  
 Justifies few results or procedures, seldom explains reasons  
 Regardless of the evidence or reasons, maintains or defends views based on self-interest or preconceptions.
- 1 Consistently does all or almost all of the following  
 Offers biased interpretations of evidence, statements, graphics, questions, information, or the points of view others;  
 Fails to identify or hastily dismisses strong, relevant counter-arguments;  
 Ignores or superficially evaluates obvious alternative points of view;  
 Argues using fallacious or irrelevant reasons, and unwarranted claims;  
 Does not justify results or procedures, nor explain reasons;  
 Regardless of the evidence or reasons, maintains or defends views based on self-interest or preconceptions.  
 Exhibits close-mindedness or hostility to reason.

California Lutheran University  
 Communication Department  
 Outcome Assessment: Writing Evaluation Grid

Poor		Average		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

1. The thesis topic/purpose is clearly expressed.

2. The paper is well organized and unified.
3. The paper is free of errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, and spelling.
4. The paper has a perspective/thesis that is consistently and creatively addressed.
5. The paper provides adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples, details and/or evaluation.
6. The writer uses language and vocabulary that is appropriately formal.
7. The conclusion synthesizes the arguments and evidence and addresses the thesis/purpose/topic.
8. The paper maintains a consistent level of excellence throughout.

## COURSE OUTLINE

Readings will be from the Myers text and selected readings on performance in groups, diversity, including issues of gender, race and ethnicity in groups, problem solving and decision making in groups.

### Week 1 – Jan. 18:

Chapter One: Components of Small Group Communication, Definition of Small Groups

Group membership exercise (list all the groups to which you have belonged for going back eight years, including the present – if in doubt, include the group anyway). After writing down the full list, select the top three favorites and give your reasons for the choices. We will discuss the lists on Friday and they will be turned in.

### Week 2 – Jan 23:

Chapter One: Components of Small Group Communication, Types of Groups

Introduction to Small Groups and Types of Groups,  
Characteristics of Groups and Teams, Culture and Groups,  
Ethics and Small Group Communication, Virtual Communication

**First journal entry due on Monday, Jan 23 (topic: group membership ranking exercise and its meaning).**

### Week - Jan 30:

Chapter Two: Small Group Communication Socialization Process, Groups as Systems

Lecture/discussion on systems  
Group participation exercise  
Input/throughput/output exercise

### Week 4 – Feb 6:

Chapter Three: Small Group Member Communication and Personality Traits

Communication Definition and Myths, Listening  
Friday, No formal class lecture - Symposium presentation preparation, Appendix B in the text, Designing and Delivering the Small Group Presentation  
**Extra credit opportunity: 10 AM, Friday, Feb 10, Careers in Communication Panel, Lundring Events Center**

Week 5- Feb 13:

Chapter Four: Diversity among Small Group Members

**Viewing of film, *The Breakfast Club***

**Second journal entry due on Friday, Feb. 17 (small group communication issues in *The Breakfast Club*.)**

Week 6 – Feb 20:

**Monday – Presidents’ Day Holiday, No Class**

Chapter Five: Models of Small Group Development

Tuckman, Gersick, and Poole models.

**Annotated bibliography of research paper or service learning paper due Wednesday, Feb 23 and symposium preparation start Wednesday**

Week 7 – Feb 27:

Chapter Six: Characteristics of Small Group Tasks

Groupthink

**Symposium presentations continue and conclude**

**Extra credit opportunity: 7 PM, Monday, Feb 27, Author Nina Revoyr, Lundring Events Center**

Week 8: - March 5:

Chapter Seven: Small Group Decision-Making Procedures

Creativity; Brainstorming, Nominal Group, Ideawriting and other decision-making techniques

**Third journal entry due Wednesday, March 7 (on symposium preparation)**

Week 9 – March 12:

Chapter Eight: Development of Small Group Role

Types of roles

**Fourth journal entry due Wednesday, March 14 (on performance in symposium)**

**Outline of individual research/service learning paper due Friday, March 16**

Prepare for Cooperative Midterm Exam 1: Myers, Chaps. 1-9, Appendix

Week 10 – March 19:

Chapter Nine: Approaches to Small Group Leadership

Classic and Popular Approaches to Leadership

**Cooperative/Individual Midterms, Monday, March 5 and Wednesday, March 7**

Week 11 – March 26:

Chapter Ten: Relational Communication among Small Group Communication Members

Prepare for symposium and work on paper.

**Viewing:** Film, *Do the Right Thing* or substitute

Week 12 – April 9:

Chapter Ten: Relational Communication among Small Group Communication Members

Prepare for symposium and work on paper.

**Viewing:** *Do the Right Thing* or substitute



**Rough draft of research/service learning paper due Wednesday, April. 11**  
**Symposium presentations begin**

Week 13 - April 16:

Due: Research or Service Learning Paper Draft

Extra credit opportunity:

**Fifth journal entry on *Do Right Thing* or substitute due, Wednesday, April 18**

Week 14 – April 23:

Chapter Eleven: Conflict in the Small Group

Definition and Types of Conflict

Extra credit opportunity - film screening: *Speaking in Tongues* examines America's resolute commitment to remaining an "English-only" nation by showcasing an America in which communication barriers are being addressed.  
Lundring Events Center

Chapter Twelve: Cohesion and Climate in the Small Group

**Rough draft of paper returned**

**Read:** Story, "La Latinera"

Week 15 – April 30:

Appendix A: Connecting Small Group Communication Concepts

Presentations on research paper/service learning projects start

**Sixth Journal entry on "La Latinera" due**

**Final Draft of Research or Service Learning Paper due Friday, May 4**

**Start viewing *Twelve Angry Men* film**

Week 16 – May 7:

Finish *Twelve Angry Men* film

***Twelve Angry Men* questions due on Wednesday, May 16**