



COM 494

Seminar in Small Group Communication (Narratives & Dark Side)

Fall 2019

Classroom: Fell Hall 112

Dates & Times: Tuesdays, 6:30 - 9:20 p.m.

Instructor: Kevin R. Meyer, Ph.D.

Email: kmeyer@ilstu.edu

Office Phone: (309) 438-3298

Cell Phone: (309) 299-1961

Office: Fell Hall 430

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00-11:30 a.m. & 5:30-6:30 p.m., Wednesdays 5:30-6:30 p.m.,
Thursdays 11:00-11:30 a.m., and by appointment

Required Readings:

Required readings are available through Milner Library or Internet hyperlinks on the ReggieNet website. Citations appear in this syllabus. A reading packet may be made available for purchase through university Printing Services (if we are able to work this out, further details will be provided). In addition, you should obtain a copy of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition).

Course Description and Objectives:

The purpose of this class is to teach you theories and skills related to successful communication in a group context. According to the graduate catalog, this course is to cover “Advanced examination of selected areas of theory and research in small group communication.” We will explore opportunities for applying small group theories in the context of our own classroom and beyond. Thus, this course is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To provide students with a comprehensive knowledge of small group and team communication theories, processes, and skills.
2. To provide students with the ability to apply conceptual ideas about effective group discussion techniques to practical communication situations (i.e., in-class activities, group meetings, a cooperative examination, a group research paper project, and a group presentation).
3. To develop students’ communication competence in small group and team settings.
4. To provide students, within the framework of an intact group, with practical experience in conducting a data-driven research project concerning a topic related to small group communication.

We will use intact groups for the duration of the semester to gain first-hand experience in group interaction and to complete a data-driven research project. Since working in research teams is a common route to publishing in our discipline, it is important for all graduate students to experience team-based research. I have two general goals for this seminar: first, we will build your scholarly knowledge of small group communication theory and research so you will be prepared to explore such content further in a doctoral program or apply the concepts covered in the course to your professional pursuits; second, we will use the course to build your curriculum

vitae by producing a useable end-product that can be submitted to a scholarly conference and, later, for publication. This seminar is specifically focused on topics concerning the dark side of small group communication, or what can go wrong in groups, as well as narratives, or how groups use storytelling during dialogue and deliberative processes. As opposed to the general survey version of this seminar, this particular narratives and dark side version of the seminar will explore completely different readings and content; meaning that students can repeat the seminar since this version of the course is distinct.

Professionalism:

Learning is maximized by carefully and critically reading class materials, note-taking, critical listening, cognitive engagement, and focusing one's attention by not yielding to distractions. Professionalism includes listening to others' perspectives (although not necessarily agreeing with those viewpoints), actively listening to those who are speaking during lectures and discussion, and working together in a spirit of cooperation. Collectively, we are a team working together to improve and learn. Each student must be a productive, contributing member of our team. Be on time for class. Use of electronic devices should not interfere with your ability to pay complete attention, nor distract classmates or myself.

Special Needs Accommodation:

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services (SAAS) in 350 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, or visit StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu. I am happy to accommodate any special needs you may have, although I require documentation from SAAS for ongoing accommodations.

Academic Misconduct Policy:

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the *Code of Student Conduct* and Graduate Student Handbook for COM. All ideas are to be appropriately cited when borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Inadequate citation, unauthorized and unacknowledged collaboration, and/or the presentation of someone else's work constitutes plagiarism. Students found to commit acts of dishonesty (including cheating on an exam, falsifying evidence, or plagiarizing a written assignment) will receive a failing grade in the course and will be referred for appropriate disciplinary action through Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. I am serious about reporting academic dishonesty and view it as my professional responsibility; I am not shy about enforcing the consequences. For group assignments, the same principle applies: groups may not plagiarize the work of others outside that group. As graduate students, you must develop a habit of being diligent about carefully and accurately citing sources while avoiding plagiarism of any sort.

Attendance Policy:

Regular attendance and active engagement are required. Come to class prepared to discuss and engage with the daily readings. Perfect attendance is expected, as your group members should be able to count on your presence and because by enrolling in this course you have made a commitment to being present during all class meetings. Absences deprive you of valuable discussions and information. There is a strong correlation between absences and grades; the more class time students miss, the lower the grades they tend to earn. Graduate students should not

have issues with attendance, but be aware that missing more than one class period will result in a 5% deduction from your overall course grade for each additional unexcused absence.

Late Work and Incomplete Grade Policy:

All assignments are expected at the beginning of class on the due date. If you do not come to class on the presentation day or the final exam day, you will forfeit your points for that assignment. An automatic 5% of the points possible will be deducted from late assignments, with an additional 10% deducted for each 24 hours the assignment is late. If these penalties seem steep, please consider that conferences and journals do not accept late work. With documented university excused absences, assignments should be completed *prior* to the absence. As a general rule, incomplete grades will not be given.

Final Examination:

The comprehensive final exam will consist of both an individual-accountability and cooperative-group assessment. Each student will take the cooperative examination with their group. All group members will be given a copy of the exam, but only one copy will serve as the group's official answer sheet. Multiple-choice questions have four possible answers (anywhere between zero to four answer options may be correct). One point is deducted for every error of omission or commission on multiple-choice items. True-false items will require a written explanation/correction of any false answer. Two points are deducted for wrong answers on true-false items, and one point is deducted for false answers missing an appropriate explanation/correction. Any group member not present for or arriving after the cooperative exam has begun must take it separately from the group, receiving whatever grade is earned (often significantly lower than the group score). Individual accountability is determined by a separate exam (consisting of the same question format) given to all group members who work separately without the benefit of group interaction. The combined grading scale is as follows:

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|--|
| 100 – 95% on individual exam = group exam score plus 20% |
| 94 – 90% on individual exam = group exam score plus 15% |
| 89 – 85% on individual exam = group exam score plus 10% |
| 84 – 80% on individual exam = group exam score plus 5% |
| 79 – 75% on individual exam = group exam score |
| 74 – 70% on individual exam = group exam score minus 5% |
| 69 – 65% on individual exam = group exam score minus 10% |
| 64 – 60% on individual exam = group exam score minus 20% |
| 59 – 50% on individual exam = group exam score minus 30% |
| 49 – 0% on individual exam = group exam score minus 40% |

Group Research Paper Project and Presentation:

Group research topics must be approved with me and must concern the dark side of small group communication or the role of narratives in group dialogue and deliberation. All group members receive the same score for each related assignment, unless voted less than a 100% share by other members. Any student wishing to vote another member less than a 100% share of the group score must email me the specific percentage and a rationale (i.e., didn't complete work, meeting absences, failed to participate fully in the assignment, etc.). Emails must be received within 24 hours following the assignment due date and are kept confidential.

The *Topic Abstract* should consist of a 1-2 page description of the research topic, concepts and theories to be addressed, a set of research questions and/or hypotheses, proposed research methods, and possible data analysis procedures.

The *IRB Protocol* should be complete and include all necessary attachments (i.e., informed consent page, and survey instruments or interview questions). CITI training is also required.

The *Research Proposal* should consist of a title page, abstract (no more than 250 words), complete literature review (approximately 10-13 pages), research questions and/or hypotheses, partial methods section, and references list. The paper must conform to APA style, 6th edition.

The *Rough Draft Paper* should be a full-length manuscript containing a title page, abstract (no more than 250 words), complete literature review, research questions and/or hypotheses, as well as the methods, results, and discussion sections. A complete references list should also be included. The paper must conform to APA style, 6th edition.

The *Paper Presentation* should last approximately 10-15 minutes. Your group's task is to present the results of your group project to the rest of the class in a conference-style format. All group members should be equally active and vocal participants in the presentation. Although a very brief description of relevant literature and theories may be necessary, the primary focus and balance of your time should be spent on the methods, results, and discussion.

The *Final Paper* should be a full-length conference paper (approximately 25 pages, excluding title page, abstract, references, tables, figures, and appendixes) containing a title page, abstract (no more than 250 words), complete literature review, research questions and/or hypotheses, as well as the methods, results, and discussion sections. A complete references list should also be included. The paper must conform to APA style, 6th edition.

Course Assignments and Grades:

The grading scale is as follows: A= 100-90%; B= 89-80%; C= 79-70%; D= 69-60%; F= 59% and below. Percentages will be calculated based on points earned from:

| | <u>Points Possible/Your Points</u> | |
|---|------------------------------------|--------|
| Topic Abstract | 5 | /_____ |
| IRB Protocol | 10 | /_____ |
| Research Proposal | 25 | /_____ |
| Rough Draft Paper | 25 | /_____ |
| Paper Presentation | 25 | /_____ |
| Final Paper | 100 | /_____ |
| Final Examination | 150 | /_____ |
| Research Study Announcement Board | 10 | /_____ |
| (The board is at: https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies/) | | |
| (Students wishing not to participate in the research studies may complete a 5-page journal article review instead. A sample is on ReggieNet.) | | |
| Total | 350 | /_____ |

References

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**Please note that APA style requires double spacing the References page. Single spacing is used here to conserve paper.*

Tentative Schedule

| Week 1 | Topic | Assignments Due |
|---------------|---|--|
| T, Aug. 20 | *Philosophy of the Course and Syllabus (rationale for study and final) *Small Group Communication Overview (Synergy, Groupthink, Narrative Theory, Symbolic Convergence Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Functional Theories and Bona Fide Group Perspective, Systems Theory, Structuration Theory) *Brainstorm Research Topics | *Read Syllabus *Explore ReggieNet *Locate readings |
| Week 2 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Aug. 27 | *Discussion (How to Read Journal Articles handout, Conference Paper Writing and Submission, Writing Research Questions and Hypotheses, Operational and Conceptual Definitions, Types of Variables, Choosing Appropriate Research Methods) *"Are dyads really groups?" *"Team size, dispersion, and social loafing in technology-supported teams: A perspective on the theory of moral disengagement." *"Too close or too far hurts: Cognitive distance and group cognitive synergy." *Form Intact Groups & Select Research Topics | *Read Moreland (2010) *Read Alnuaimi et al. (2010) *Read Meslec & Curseu (2013) |
| Week 3 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Sept. 3 | *Discussion (Writing an Abstract, Random Assignment and Sampling, Manipulation Checks) *"Punishment and spite, the dark side of cooperation." *"Teaming with emotion: The impact of emotionality on work-team collaboration." *"Recognizing contributions: Face-support and face-threat influences students' emotional and communicative responses." *"Assessing the role of peer relationships in the small group communication course." | *Read Jensen (2010) *Read Clark & Sline (2003) *Read Kennedy-Lightsey (2010) *Read Myers et al. (2010) |
| Week 4 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Sept. 10 | *Activity (9 dots, Mindtrap) *Discussion (Researching and Writing a Lit Review, Completing an IRB Protocol, Writing an Informed Consent Form, Finding and Creating Survey Instruments, Creating Interview Questions/Protocols, Likert and Likert-Type Scales) *"Perceived diversity and team functioning: The role of diversity beliefs and affect." *"How, when, and why bad apples spoil the barrel: Negative group members and dysfunctional groups." *"Bad apples or bad barrels: An examination of group- and organizational-level effects in the study of counterproductive work behavior." | ** <i>Topic Abstracts due</i> * <i>CITI training due</i> *Read Hentschel et al. (2013) *Read Felps et al. (2006) *Read O'Boyle et al. (2011) |

| Week 5 | Topic | Assignments Due |
|---------------|--|--|
| T, Sept. 17 | *Activity (hurricane) *"Conflict in small groups: The meaning and consequences of process conflict." *"Psychological and communication processes associated with intergroup conflict resolution." *"A longitudinal study of team conflict, conflict management, cohesion, and team effectiveness." *"Conflict and creativity in groups." | ** <i>IRB Protocol due</i> *Read Behfar et al. (2011) *Read Stephan (2008) *Read Tekleab et al. (2009) *Read Troyer & Youngreen (2009) |
| Week 6 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Sept. 24 | *Activity (bead jars, fallout shelter) *"A laboratory investigation of groupthink." *"Detecting groupthink: Methods for observing the illusion of unanimity." *"Breaking the silence: Differentiating crises of agreement." *"Testing the groupthink model: Effects of promotional leadership and conformity predisposition." *"A comparative study of the 'Abilene paradox' and 'groupthink.'" | *Read Courtright (1978) *Read Cline (1990) *Read Taras (1991) *Read Ahlfinger & Esser (2001) *Read Kim (2001) |
| Week 7 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Oct. 1 | *Activity (Stanford/Milgram video) *"The performance turn in narrative studies." *"Using narratives to study task group effectiveness." *"Stories in action and the dialogic management of identities: Storytelling in transplant support group meetings." *"The stories of pregnancy: On interpretation of small-group cultures." | *Read Peterson & Langellier (2006) *Read Hirokawa et al. (2000) *Read Hsieh (2004) *Read Peterson (1987) |
| Week 8 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Oct. 8 | *Activity (moon) *Discussion (Writing a Methods Section, Factor Analysis, Scale Reliability) *"Quality interactions and family storytelling." *"Counterfactual thinking in the jury room." *"Group polarization and <i>12 Angry Men</i> ." | *Read Thorson et al. (2013) *Read SunWolf (2010) *Read Sunstein (2007) |
| Week 9 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Oct. 15 | *"The dark side of self- and social perception: Black uniforms and aggression in professional sports." *"Effort intentions in teams: Effects of task type and teammate performance." *"Cooperative and competitive structures of trust relations in teams." | *Read Frank & Gilovich (1988) *Read Huffmeier et al. (2013) *Read Lusher et al. (2014) |

| Week 10 | Topic | Assignments Due |
|--------------------|--|--|
| T, Oct. 22 | *Discussion (Analyzing Data, Writing a Results Section) **“The effects of group factors on deception detection performance.” **“Enhancing confidentiality within small groups: The experiences of AIDS service organizations.” | ** <i>Research Proposals due</i> *Read Zhou et al. (2013) *Read Olivier (2009) |
| Week 11 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Oct. 29 | **“Communication paralysis during peer-group exclusion: Social dynamics that prevent children and adolescents from expressing disagreement.” **“Being left out: Rejecting outsiders and communicating group boundaries in childhood and adolescent peer groups.” **“Bullying as a group process: Participant roles and their relations to social status within the group.” | *Read Sunwolf & Leets (2003) *Read Sunwolf & Leets (2004) *Read Salmivalli et al. (1996) |
| Week 12 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Nov. 5 | *Discussion (Writing a Discussion Section) **“The dark side of groups: A “gang at work” in Enron.” **“The dark side of authority: Antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes of organizational corruption.” | *Read Stein & Pinto (2011) *Read Aguilera & Vadera (2008) |
| Week 13 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Nov. 12 | *Discussion (Revising a Manuscript, APA Style, DOI rules) **“Assessing threats of targeted group violence: Contributions from social psychology.” **“Terrorism and small groups: An analytical framework for group disruption.” | *Read Pynchon & Borum (1999) *Read Reedy et al. (2013) |
| Week 14 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Nov. 19 | *Course Evaluations *Synthesis and Reflection *Discussion (Presenting at a Conference, Submitting for Publication) | ** <i>Group Rough Draft Papers due</i> |
| Week 15 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Nov. 26 | * NO CLASS (Fall Break) ** <i>Research Board Participation due</i> | |
| Week 16 | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Dec. 3 | ** <i>Group Paper Presentations (academic conference style)</i> *Activity (practice exam questions, review for final exam) | ** <i>Group Final Papers due</i> |
| Finals Week | Topic | Assignments Due |
| T, Dec. 10 | *** FINAL EXAMINATION in Fell Hall 112 (5:30-7:30 p.m.) ***Exact date and time to be confirmed by Registrar | |