SPCH 114, Small Group Communication
5 credits, Fall 2015, Tuesday 6:00-8:15PM RCA 220

Instructor: Mike Rancourt, PhD
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Office Hours: Tuesday 4:45-5:45PM
Email: mrancourt@lowercolumbia.edu

Class Website: lcc.instructure.com/login/canvas

Course Description:
Introduces principles and processes of small groups and development of skills for participation and leadership in small group settings. Practice in problem solving, decision making, information sharing, and the relational aspects of small group work. Includes analysis and evaluation of project-based small group work. Students will apply small group communication concepts to analyze their own work in a variety of structured discussions and activities. Speech 114 is an introductory course primarily for transfer students and transfers to all senior institutions. An entry-level course, it has no prerequisites. SPCH 114 serves as part of the Communications Requirement for the AA-DTA. It fulfills the requirement of the Humanities distribution list.

Instructor’s Introduction:
I wish education were more like real life, and I wish real life were more like community. I say this in all my classes, and it shapes the way I design a course, present ideas, and interact with students. In this class, it means I want to encourage a cooperative group environment and recognize that we all come to this space with different goals, experiences, and skills. My greatest contribution is that I have tons of experience working in democratic groups and in researching communication, so I imagine students have come to me and asked, “Can you help us learn about small group communication?” If this were a community instead of a school, you’d expect a different kind of response than you normally see in a classroom. The way I present this course might sound strange and different sometimes. That’s because I want to think differently about the roles we each fill in the classroom. The grading and assignment policies described in this syllabus might look complex, as a result, but they’re designed with student choice in mind. Take a look.

Course Objectives:
By the end of the course, students will:

• Identify the elements and describe the process of small group communication.
• Identify and describe motivations for member participation in groups, phases in group development, and roles and role emergence in groups.
• Use meeting management and facilitation techniques to organize, plan, conduct, and evaluate various small group discussions and activities.
• Discuss and apply small group theory to analyze groups in private and public settings.
• Identify and demonstrate leadership skills in small group and team environments.
• Identify and demonstrate techniques and skills for developing and maintaining a supportive climate in a small group.
• Demonstrate effective communication skills in a small group.
• Describe the impact of culture on team interactions, and demonstrate intercultural sensitivity during the group process.
• Identify and use assertiveness and conflict management strategies in a small group.

1 Call me Mike.
• Utilize appropriate virtual meeting formats to enhance group project work.
• Work in a small group to identify, research, analyze, and resolve a problem and/or develop a project.

Required texts:
Texts will be provided as PDF documents on Canvas.

Hybrid Class:
This course is listed as a hybrid class. Therefore, students must have access to a digital device (computer, tablet, smartphone) with high speed internet access, a digital video camera, and the means to connect to the Canvas Learning Management System. There, you will find and share materials with the class and interact with me and your fellow classmates. Of course, there are also many other third-party online tools you may find useful in communicating and coordinating in your group work, but you can start with Canvas. Finally, please be in the habit of checking your campus email or forwarding it to an email service you check regularly. I will send out messages about class and assignments through campus email. If you don’t receive them, you may fall behind, miss out, and find your grade suffering.

Technology Devices in Class:
I encourage students to use their laptops and such to take notes in class. I mean, it’s 2015, for Pete’s sake!

Academic Honesty:
Students are expected to be honest and forthright in their academic endeavors. To incorporate the words or ideas of another without giving credit to the source or to cheat on an examination corrupts the essential process by which knowledge is advanced. Refer to the Student Handbook for more details and potential consequences for engaging in academic dishonesty.

Grading:
Grading in this class is all about how much you demonstrate engagement with the course material and contribute to the class and group community. The assignments you turn in will receive a credit/no credit yet evaluation. Because learning and the development of skills are active and ongoing processes, there are virtually endless opportunities to revise any work. In other words, revisions are welcome. The standard by which I determine whether an assignment is given credit is based entirely on the following principle: Do college-level work. Think back to any writing courses you’ve taken, and public speaking courses you’ve taken, and do honest, serious work. Here are guidelines for completing “college level work:”
• Writing should be clear and in the appropriate voice for college students.
• Whether the assignment is an essay, an oral presentation, or in some other form, it should demonstrate critical and intellectual engagement.
• Presentation (written, spoken, graphic, etc…) should demonstrate serious consideration of the conventions of college work.

Grade Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95-100 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79 pts</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>74-76 pts</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73 pts</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69 pts</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>64-66 pts</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-63 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59 pts</td>
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Assignments:
All written assignments will be turned in electronically through Canvas or email. No paper, please. Grades are based on three categories of contribution/work: First, your grade is based on your contribution to the classroom community for a total of 10 possible points (see below). I’ve developed this as an alternative to normal attendance and participation grades (see attendance policy below). Second, your grade is based on your participation in group assignments for a total of 40 possible points (see below). Third, your grade is based on your individual reflections/assessments for a total of 50 possible points (see below).

A. Contribute to classroom community (10 points maximum)
   1. Show up to class
      • 3 points for missing zero classes
      • 2 points for missing only 1 class
      • 1 point for missing 2 or 3 classes
      • 0 points for missing 4 or more classes

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2. Complete reviews of third-party group management software/applications and share them with the class on Canvas
   - 2 points for each detailed review you complete (credit/no credit yet)
3. Study guide for key concepts in small group communication
   - 2 points for each study guide you complete (credit/no credit yet)
4. Show up and participate in a productive group meeting (credit/no credit yet)
   - 1 point for those in attendance for each productive meeting

B. Complete group assignments (40 points maximum)
   - Project Problem identification & analysis report, 10 points (credit/no credit yet).
   - Project solutions options and selection report, 10 points (credit/no credit yet).
   - Project completion report, 20 points (credit/no credit yet).

C. Complete individual reflections and assessments (50 points maximum)
   - Pre-reflection on your group and communication skills, 5 points (credit/no credit yet).
   - Survey reflections 5 points each, no more than 8 of them for 40 points (credit/no credit yet).*
   - Post-project reflection on your contribution and the group’s challenges and strengths with reference to concepts in small group communication theory, 10 points (credit/no credit yet).

Here’s a chart to help make the value of assignments more clear:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community 10 pts max</th>
<th>Group 40 pts max</th>
<th>Reflections 50 pts max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attend Class</td>
<td>0-3 pts</td>
<td>Problem ID&amp; Analysis Rpt. 10 pt Pre-reflection 5 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Software</td>
<td>2-10 pts</td>
<td>Solution Options/Choice 10 pt Survey Reflections* 5 pts ea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Guide</td>
<td>2-10 pts</td>
<td>Completion Report 20 pt Post-Reflection 10 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend Meetings</td>
<td>1-10 pts</td>
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</tbody>
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*To get an A, you’d probably have to do about 6 of these, assuming you did everything else.

**NOTE:** No, there are no extra credit assignments. However, you should notice that there are plenty of ways to get more than enough points and revisions are always welcome.

**Group projects:**
The heart of this course is the group project, which come in two forms:

- Service Learning project – You may choose a “service based learning” project. For this project, you go into the Longview (or other) community and develop a project to help an existing community service organization accomplish its goals. I’ll provide much more information on what this looks like in a separate document, but basically, your group will work to solve some problem, accomplish some task, or improve some service.
- Serious Research Project – The group will do a collaborative research project on a local or larger social problem. I’ll provide much more information on this, but basically, you’ll be doing this research in order to present what you’ve learned to a group of people (this class, a public audience online) in order to raise consciousness and propose novel ways of addressing the problem.

Whichever type of assignment you choose, the **first group assignment is a report on the problem and its context,** followed by a separate **report on possible solutions and the solution you’ve chosen** to pursue in your group work. At the end of the quarter, you’ll **share your findings with the class.**

**Group management software/application review** (2 points each)
For this optional assignment, you will find a free application or software (or online service) that is marketed toward or useful for organizing and accomplishing small-group tasks. For example, you might find an online service that helps busy people find a common time they are all available for a meeting or a piece of software that is used for collaborative editing of documents, or you might find an app that helps generate surveys used for collecting and processing information from many people. If you find something like that, your task is to review how well it works, how easy it is (or seems) to implement, how beneficial it is (or seems), or what its drawbacks and limitations are (design flaws?), etc… You will share this review on Canvas where your classmates can find it and, presumably, make use of it if they need it. Alternatively, you can review a common online communication interface that you have used and address how it is and is not well-suited for use in small-group projects (keeping in mind that public communication tools might not always be the right choice for private group communication, etc…). I’ll provide much more detail on this assignment separately.

**Group Meeting Minutes** (1 point each)
Each time your group meets, one person will take meeting minutes, which will be shared with me. These will include notes on any topics you discuss, proposals that were made, decisions that were agreed upon, etc… and you will note who was in attendance. Each person in attendance will get 1 point for any meeting in which something substantial happens. A meeting with no discussion or decisions is cool, but it’s not a meeting. Meetings can be face-to-face or virtual, as long as they are synchronous (should include both video and audio). Note that there are no due dates listed for this assignment. Have a meeting when you need one, and turn in the minutes after you’ve had the meeting.

Study Guide (2 points each)
In completing the reflections described below, you’ll do well to make reference to concepts from small group communication theory. As such, I invite you to produce optional study guides to help your classmates understand and remember key concepts and how to use them. To complete this assignment, you’ll produce a study guide with the material organized in some way to show connections between concepts and make the content easier to understand or remember, and you’ll post it on Canvas where your classmates can see it. I’ll provide a lot more detail separately.

Pre-reflection, Survey Reflections, and Post-Reflections (5 or 10 points each)
At the beginning of the course, I will provide a pre-reflection assignment in which I will invite you to think about your experience working and communicating in groups. In addition, the online assignment each week will invite you to complete some sort of survey, which also serves as a prompt for a writing assignment in which reflect on the topic the give survey addresses and your responses to the questions it asks. As we near the end of the quarter, I’ll invite you to reflect on the group work you’ve done. In all of these reflections, you’ll do best when you refer to specific group communication concepts covered in the literature and class discussions. The purpose of all this is to help foster an awareness of group processes and communication practices. In fact, that’s really the whole point of this course. Group participation is a skill, and skill is developed largely through practice and reflection. I’ll provide a lot more information on what this looks like separately.

Attendance:
As noted above, I’ve developed an alternative to normal attendance and participation grades. This is done in attempt to recognize that students are often faced with a variety of demands on their time (some work, some have families, some have other extra-curricular commitments) and to recognize that there are many ways to contribute to the community. I understand that you may need to miss classes once in a while. I don’t do excused absences because it’s not my business to judge your reasons for missing class. I trust that if you miss class, you have a reason that’s good for you. I also trust that you’ll do what needs to be done to make up for your absence (i.e. asking a classmate for notes, turning in assignments electronically that were due that day, etc…).

Mutual Consideration:
Please view this class as a community. That means it is the task of all members of the community to take care of themselves and each other. I am not a police officer. It is not my job to make sure you “stay in line.” I am not in the business of telling people what to do or disciplining anyone. What I am getting at is this: if someone or something is causing a distraction or disturbance in class, don’t wait for me to solve the problem like I am some hard-nosed authority figure. If someone is distracting you, ask them nicely to stop doing so. The flip side of this is that everybody should try to be aware that what they are doing might be distracting to others. Don’t take it personally if somebody asks you to stop distracting them. Do your best to trust that they are doing so in good faith, not because they are mean but because they are trying to concentrate.

Disability Support Services and Accommodations
Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Disability Support Services Office as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. All accommodations must first be approved through the Disability Support Services. Disability Support Services is located in the Admissions Building, 143. For an appointment or information contact Mary Kate Morgan 442-2340 or email mmorgan@lowercolumbia.edu

Schedule:
The schedule below lists a topic I will talk about in class on the date named. Below that are readings (available as PDFs on Canvas) that are relevant to that topic. You are not “required” to read these texts before class. I will not quiz you on them. All readings are simply provided as to help give you the vocabulary, frameworks, and inspiration to help completely the coursework. Some days have chapters from different text books on the same topic. That’s just so you

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have plenty of options. It’s not meant to get you to read everything unless you feel like it. The third line for each date is the online activity. In most cases, there is an online survey you may complete before or after class. **NOTE: DUE DATES FOR ONLINE WORK ARE SPECIFIED IN THE LISTING. THE DUE DATE MAY NOT BE ON A DAY CLASS MEETS.**

**WEEK 1**  
**SEPTEMBER 22nd**: Introductions  
In class: Adler & Rodman Ch 1, Palloff & Pratt Ch 1, Conrad & Donaldson  
Online: Comm Apprehension Survey, Pre-reflection (due to me by the end of the day on Friday, September 29th)

**WEEK 2**  
**SEPTEMBER 29th**: Forming groups  
In class: Alle-Corliss (63-76) Tuckman, Beebe & Masterson Ch 11  
Online: On “Topics” discussion board, propose potential topics and/or local organization that might be considered for groups

**WEEK 3**  
**OCTOBER 6th**: Meetings and such  
In class: Beebe & Masterson Appendix A, Sivunen & Valo and Banner et al.  
Online: Review software due on the discussion board by the end of the day on October 13th.

**WEEK 4**  
**OCTOBER 13th**: Working well together  
In class: Meyers & Anderson Ch 12 and Ch 10 pgs. 190-194, Beebe & Masterson Ch 6 and Ch 7 146-150  
Online: Listening Style Survey, Empathy Survey  
**Problem ID & analysis report DUE on Canvas by end of day on October 20th**

**WEEK 5**  
**OCTOBER 20th**: Socialization  
In class: Meyers & Anderson Ch 2 and 10, Beebe & Masterson Ch 3 and 7  
Online: Small Group Socialization Scale Survey

**WEEK 6**  
**OCTOBER 27th**: Roles  
In class: Meyers & Anderson Ch 8, Beebe & Masterson Ch 5 96-101  
Online: Comm Style Measure Survey, Ruining it for the rest of us

**WEEK 7**  
**NOVEMBER 3rd**: Democracy  
In class: Decision-making, Seeds for Change, Gastil Ch 2  
Online: Political Spectrum Quiz Survey  
**Solution Options/Choice DUE on Canvas by the end of the day on November 10th**

**WEEK 8**  
**NOVEMBER 10th**: Leadership  
In class: Beebe & Masterson Ch 9, Meyers & Anderson Ch 9, Pennington Ch 6  
Online: Leadership Questionnaire Survey

**WEEK 9**  
**NOVEMBER 17th**: Conflict management  
In class: Meyers & Anderson Ch 11, Beebe & Masterson Ch 8  
Online: Conflict Management Survey, Verbal Aggressiveness Survey, Argumentativeness Survey

**WEEK 10**  
**NOVEMBER 24th**: Appreciate diversity  
In class: Meyers & Anderson Ch 4, Beebe & Masterson Ch 5, 115-119; Pennington 21-23;113-115  
Online: Cultural Diversity Self Assessment Survey

**WEEK 11**  
**DECEMBER 1st**: Final group presentations  
In class: Beebe & Masterson Appendix B  
Online: Work on final reflection

**WEEK 12**  
**DECEMBER 8th**: Conclusion  
In class: Final group presentations if necessary  
Online: **Post-project reflection and Project Completion Report DUE by the end of the day on Canvas**

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**Our Mission:**

The mission of Lower Columbia College is to ensure each learner’s personal and professional success, and influence lives in ways that are local, global, traditional, and innovative.